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CHARLES KNIGHT'S

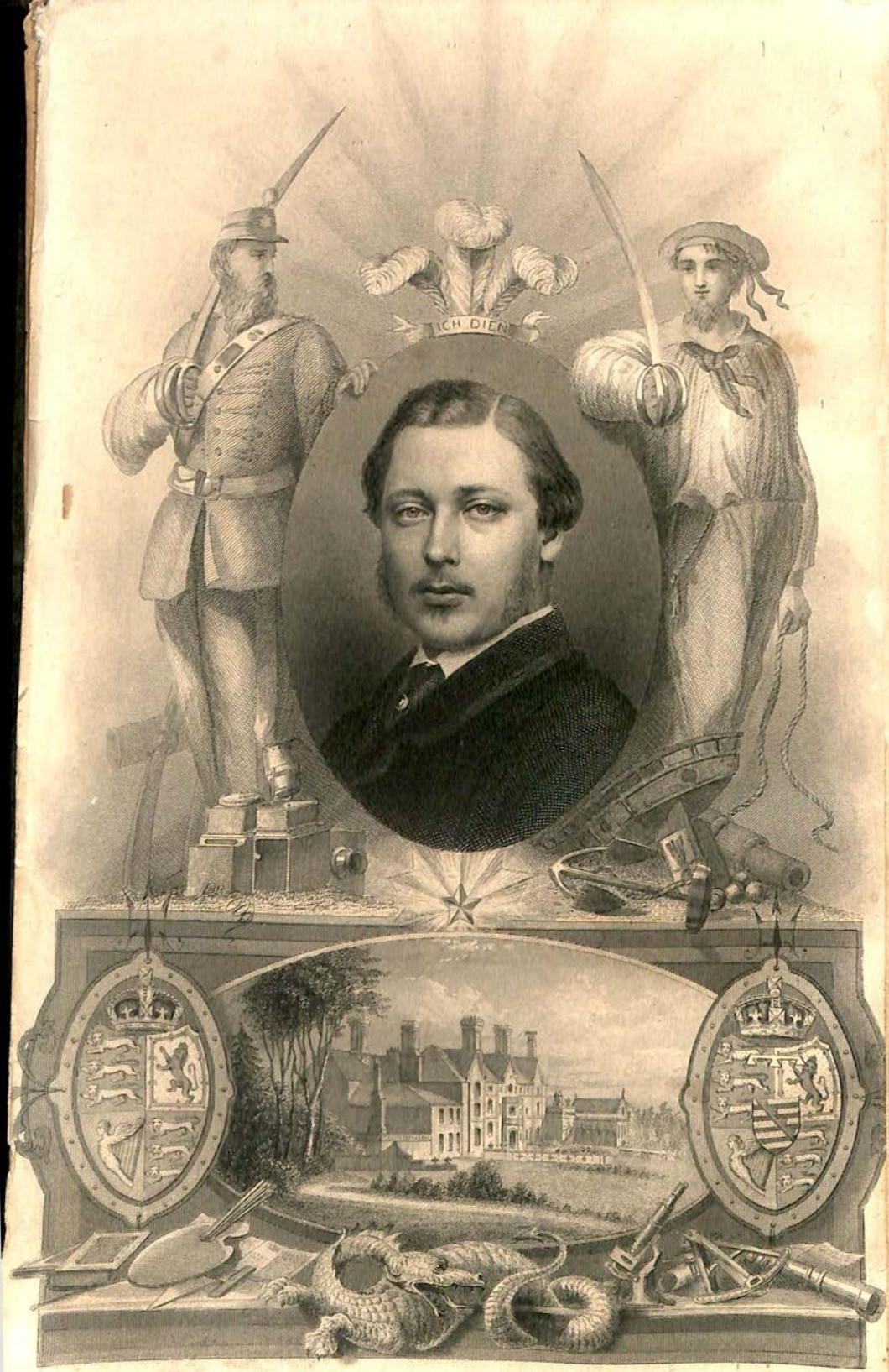
POPULAR

HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

"The harvest gathered in the fields of the Past is to be brought home for the use of the Present."—Dr. Arnold, *Lectures on Modern History.*

VOL. I.

FROM THE INVASION OF CÆSAR TO THE END OF THE REIGN OF EDWARD III.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THE POPULAR

HISTORY OF ENGLAND:

An Illustrated History

OF SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO OUR OWN TIMES.

BY CHARLES KNIGHT.

"The harvest gathered in the fields of the Past is to be brought home for the use of the Present."—DR. ARNOLD, *Lectures on Modern History.*

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VOLUME I.

FROM THE INVASION OF CÆSAR TO THE END OF THE REIGN OF EDWARD III.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET

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TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

Albert Edward,

PRINCE OF WALES, K.G.,

&c., &c., &c.

SIR,

MY attempt to write a History of England more in unison with the requirements of the present age than the Histories, still in common use, which were published in the last century, has reached its close, after a continuous labour of long duration. My work is concluded at the period when your Royal Highness is about to complete your twenty-first year. On this auspicious Birth-day, I present this History to your Royal Highness, dedicating it to you with profound respect.

The History of our country, thus soliciting your Royal Highness's gracious reception, was entitled "Popular," as being intended to form a History of the People as well as a History of the State. In tracing the gradual advance of this People out of slavery, feudal oppression, and regal despotism, to the attainment of equal justice and well-guarded rights, my duty has been to show how the union of Liberty with Order has at length made the British Throne the securest in the world, reposing upon deep-rooted institutions possessing that capacity for safe because gradual development, which, at every stage of our national progress, has been fruitful in salutary improvement.

Humbly acknowledging the bounty of that Providence which has conducted this nation to a period of unexampled repose, apparent safety, and manifest prosperity, I echo the universal feeling in expressing my conviction that to the constitutional principles and public virtues of the Queen, and to the great example of private excellence exhibited by Her Majesty and the deeply-lamented Prince Consort, we owe very much of the good we now enjoy. Those social ameliorations which have been the happiest characteristics of the Queen's beneficent reign, and which it was the unwearied endeavour of your Royal Highness's illustrious Father to promote, will, I have the assured belief, receive a new impulse from your Royal Highness's fostering care.

With the earnest prayer that by the Divine Blessing your Royal Highness may be strengthened in every patriotic work, and may live long in the enjoyment of all domestic happiness, surrounded by the affections of the People,

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Your Royal Highness's obliged and devoted Servant,

CHARLES KNIGHT.

NOVEMBER, 1862.

PREFACE.

I WISH to set down, with plainness and sincerity, the motives that have induced me to undertake a New History of England, and the objects I propose to myself in the task.

In October, 1854, upon the occasion of Lord John Russell delivering an address at Bristol on the Study of History, the following observations appeared in "The Times:"—

"We have no other *History of England* than Hume's. The cool, scoffing philosopher, who could relate with unruffled temper the outrages of despotism, the vices of kings, and the extravagances of superstition, and reserved his criticisms for genius and his sarcasms for zeal, still retains his place on our shelves and our tables. Goldsmith has put him out of boys' schools, and Mrs. Markham has hit on a style that does admirably for young ladies; but when a young man of eighteen asks for a *History of England*, there is no resource but to give him Hume."

Many of the materials for "The Popular History of England" had been collected and arranged before these remarks were published. I had long desired to write a *History of the People;* a history which should not merely disport in "a gay wilderness of anecdotes, manners and customs, furniture and fashions," but should connect domestic matters with the course of public events and the political condition of the various classes of society. One observation of the accomplished journalist gave a definite character to this desire. I considered the "young man of eighteen" the representative of a very large class of readers in the present day—those, of either sex, who with the average amount of intelligence that has now made us a reading people have no superabundant leisure for pursuing the history of their country as a laborious and difficult study. The lawyer and the statesman cannot be satisfied with a compendious history. They must toil through much of the same mass of documentary material as that upon which the historical writer constructs his narrative. But for the great body of present readers, even twenty octavo volumes constitute a formidable undertaking. Hume was compendious compared with Rapin. But when we are content to forget "the scoffing philosopher" in the narrative powers of one of the most perfect masters of style,—and can even patiently endure his studied perversions of historical evidence in our wonder at the skill of the most subtle of casuists,

—we have yet to seek for a History of England. Hume gives us the history of our country to 1689. More than a century and a half of the most instructive history of modern times is to be sought in professed "Continuations," which, if they are free from the taint of Hume's manifold defects, have little claim to share the honour of his surpassing merits. Smollett takes up the narrative of Hume; and, with no great labour of research, finds his way through another seventy years. We have to choose between the "Continuations" of Smollett, for the history of nearly a century before we reach our own period. Looking at the bulk of these various performances which have been accustomed to travel in an ill-assorted companionship with Hume, we may ask if a history of proportionate dimensions is not wanting in our time? Above all, is not a *compendious* work, full without overflowing, and written upon an uniform plan, particularly needed, "when a young man of eighteen asks for a History of England?"

In coming to a definite view of the nature of the book which I should desire to offer, I had no inducement to depart from my original design of writing a History of the People. Such a history appears to me best suited for those who are putting on the duties of life, and looking forward to discharge them with a clear view of their rights and obligations, founded upon a comprehensive understanding of the past. But to avoid giving an impression that I was about to write the Domestic History of our country, apart from its Public History, I determined to entitle my book "The Popular History of England." Let me endeavour to explain my views on this second point.

Dr. Johnson, in conversation with Dr. Robertson, is related to have said: —"I have heard Henry's 'History of Britain' well spoken of; I am told it is carried on in separate divisions, as the civil, the military, the religious history. I wish much to have one branch well done, and that is the history of manners, of common life." To this Robertson answered:—"Henry should have applied his attention to that alone, which is enough for any man." Dr. Robertson, I presume to think, did not take a complete view of this subject. "The history of manners, of common life," is essentially dependent upon "the civil, the military, the religious history" of a nation. Public events act upon the condition of a people, and the condition of a people interchangeably acts upon public events.

But History, as it is generally written, deals too exclusively with public events; and it is carried on too much "in separate divisions." We ought not only to chronicle the acts of sovereigns and statesmen, but we should "read their history in a nation's eyes." We should understand the inseparable connection between the State history and the Domestic. When there is prosperous industry and fireside comfort, then, it may be assumed, there is good government. When labour is oppressed and homes are wretched, then,

however powerful may be authority and arms however triumphant, there is "something rotten in the State."

Properly to trace this essential connection between Government and People, we must look at history from a new point of view. We must put the People in the foreground. We must study events and institutions, not as abstract facts, but as influencing the condition of a whole nation.

"The monstrous creed of millions made for one—"

it is gone. Let us look at the "millions" with another faith—the faith of our own times.

The People, if I understand the term rightly, means the Commons of these realms, and not any distinct class or section of the population. Ninety years ago, Goldsmith called the "middle order of mankind" the "People," and those below them the "Rabble." We have outlived all this. A century of thought and action has widened and deepened the foundations of the State. This People, then, want to find, in the history of their country, something more than a series of annals, either of policy or war. In connection with a faithful narrative of public affairs, they want to learn their own history—how they have grown out of slavery, out of feudal wrong, out of regal despotism, into constitutional liberty, and the position of the greatest estate of the realm. They want to know how the course of events, the principles of government, and the progress of all our social institutions, have affected their condition. They want to know how the discoveries of science, and the refinements of art and literature, have raised them in the moral and social scale. They want to know how the great work of the elevation of industry has progressed from age to age in past times, and from year to year in our times. They want to learn the history of the English Home, as well as the history of the English State.

The province of the historian is symbolised by those paintings of the Muse of History, which represent her with a half expanded scroll. She has a great office—to make the Past intelligible to the Present for the guidance of the Future:

"Past and Future are the wings
On whose support, harmoniously conjoin'd,
Moves the great spirit of human knowledge."

But the contemplative and passionless Muse also points out the humbler, but not less important duty of the patient antiquary, who unrolls many a forgotten document "rich with the spoils of time." This is the office which Sir Philip Sydney somewhat satirised when he described the historian, "loaden with old mouse-eaten records; authorising himself, for the most part, upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation Hearsay; having much ado to accord differing writers, and to pick truth out of partiality." This is the especial labour of him who

attempts to write a popular compendium of the History of England. But to be popular, he need not be unphilosophical; to be truly philosophical he must be invariably accurate, and occasionally minute. He has to select from a vast storehouse of facts; but he cannot make a judicious selection without a broad comprehension of their relative value. How these facts are to be grouped—what the prominence to be given to individual facts—depends very much upon his pre-conceived theory of the office of historian. "History," it is said, "is philosophy teaching by example." This aphorism was promulgated when it was thought expedient to regard history as a vast collection of raw material that might be worked up into illustrations of moral science, in which science political and religious theories were necessarily included. But the tendency of much modern historical writing has been somewhat in the opposite direction. Striking events and interesting personages have been exhibited in prominent relief, without any great attention to the figures of the back-ground, or the relation of the scene to the multitudinous occurrences and opinions of its own age or of previous ages. It is in the due admixture of the individual and the general that history should find the course of its highest duty—that of popular instruction. For myself, I may say that having no pretension to aim at what is called the dignity of history; not labouring to establish any pre-conceived theory of public good beyond asserting the great principle of social progress; and cherishing a disposition more to general tolerance than sectarian animosity; I aspire only to make the history of my country a connected narrative of the progress of the people of my country. If I accomplish this, I shall not be very careful about selecting facts that may especially vindicate "philosophy teaching by example." I shall tell fairly what I believe to be true, without concerning myself whether it offend or conciliate adverse opinions, political or religious. The time is long since past, when the deposition of Richard II. was considered a dangerous precedent, as regarded the Crown; and the time is not far distant when Dunstan and Becket may have a candid appreciation without a real or implied prostration before any principle of Church supremacy. All men who have had a marked influence upon their time demand to be exhibited in connection with the circumstances amidst which they operated. On the one hand, whatever may be the spirit of an age, individual worth and delinquency, wisdom and folly, reason and passion, have had very much to do in the advancement or retardation of that spirit. On the other hand, the spirit of an age, however hidden or imperfectly seen, has always exercised a great control upon all individual action, for good or for evil. Gray, in his quality of a philosophical poet, has said that,

> "Love could teach a monarch to be wise,
> And gospel-light first dawn'd from Bullen's eyes."

But out of the fierce passion of Henry, or the fatal ambition of Anne, no "gospel-light" would have shone, had not Wickliffe and Luther banished some of the darkness that preceded the dawning.

The one great fact that renders it so imperatively necessary that the Englishman should be familiar with the history of his country—not merely of its regal annals but of all the varying aspects of society—is this: All that we justly pride ourselves upon, whether in our institutions or our national character, has resulted from the principle of growth, and not of creation. The history of every nation "has been in the main sequential." Each of its phases has been "the consequence of some prior phase, and the natural prelude of that which succeeded it."* Most especially must this great principle be borne in mind—a principle which the writer now quoted terms "the new science"—in writing upon English history, with the advantage of our modern additions to the materials of historical knowledge. It will be my first endeavour to keep this principle in view, in treating of our national history, civil and ecclesiastical, before the Conquest. The early history of the Anglican Church—its martyrdoms and its conversions, its humanising influences of piety and learning, its rich endowments, its corruptions, its struggles for supremacy—is a history to be traced in all the subsequent elements of our ecclesiastical condition. Upon the Roman and Saxon civilisation were founded many of the great principles of government which have preserved their vitality amongst us during the lapse of sixteen centuries. The Norman feudality could not destroy the municipal institutions which we derived from the one, nor weaken the spirit of personal liberty which we inherited from the other. The Norman despotism was absorbed by the Anglo-Saxon freedom; and feudality could only maintain itself by the recognition, however incomplete, of the equal rights of all men before the law. From the deposition of Richard the Second to the abdication of James the Second, every act of national resistance was accomplished by the union of classes, and was founded upon some principle of legal right for which there was legal precedent. Out of the traditional and almost instinctive assertion of the popular privileges have come new developments of particular reforms, each adapted to its own age, but all springing out of that historical experience which we recognise as Constitutional. It is this step by step progress which renders it so imperative upon the modern historian not to leap over any one phase of national advance; and thus it necessarily results that it being now seen that no portion of the history of our country is unimportant, our earlier history must require an expanded treatment, if we would rightly comprehend the essential connection of every one of its parts as links of the same chain.

* "History, as a Condition of Social Progress," by Samuel Lucas, M.A.

It may be desirable to indicate, very briefly, the general distribution of the several parts of this History. It will not be carried on "in separate divisions." It may be convenient to a writer to treat of a period under distinct heads, such as those adopted by Dr. Henry—Civil and Military; Ecclesiastical; Constitution; Learning; Arts; Commerce; Manners:—but such an arrangement necessarily involves a large amount of prolixity and repetition. The intervals, also, at which the several divisions occur in works so conducted are much too long; for, in a century and a half, or two centuries, social changes are usually so great, that the Laws, Learning, Arts, and Customs of the beginning of such a period have little in common with those of its conclusion. At convenient intervals, in this work, a Chapter will follow the State History, in which these various aspects of Society will be embraced. Thus, accompanying the early narrative, Chapter III. is devoted to such matters in connection with the Roman period, under the head of "Condition of the Country at the end of the Third Century." The same principle will be adopted at a marked point of the Saxon period; the same of the Norman; and so on to modern times. Neither will the distinction of Reigns be so emphatically observed as is usual in our histories. The Regnal years are most convenient chronological marks—as useful as mile-stones to the traveller. But as the traveller does not halt at each mile-stone to survey the country, so the historical reader should not be compelled to make a dead stop, when a second William succeeds to a first, or a third Edward to a second. Except in very remarkable cases, which may be called revolutionary, society undergoes little change at the immediate period of the accession of one Plantagenet to another Plantagenet, or even of a Stuart to a Tudor. The changes are gradual, like those of the natural world. Great historical eras are as marked as the Seasons. But as Spring slides into Summer, and Autumn into Winter, so we pass on from Domesday-book to the Charter of Liberties, and from the Conformity Bill to Catholic Emancipation, not by jumps from reign to reign, but by progressive scenes, in which others than Sovereigns are conspicuous, and in which the accessories representing public opinion and society are of as much importance as the chief actors.

I have to observe, in conclusion, that the wood-engravings have been selected by me, not as mere embellishments but as illustrations of the text. They will have the advantage, in many cases, of presenting a more vivid picture than any description, of localities, of monumental remains, of costume, of works of industry and art, of popular amusements; and, in connection with portraits of the sovereigns engraved on steel, of remarkable persons, in civil, military, ecclesiastical, and literary history.

CHARLES KNIGHT.

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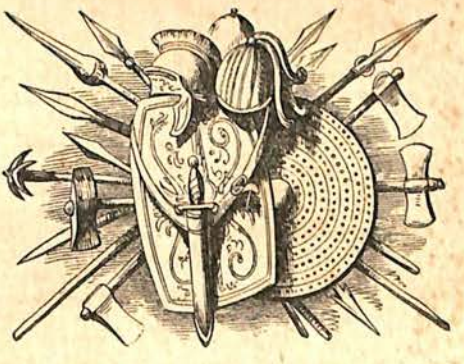
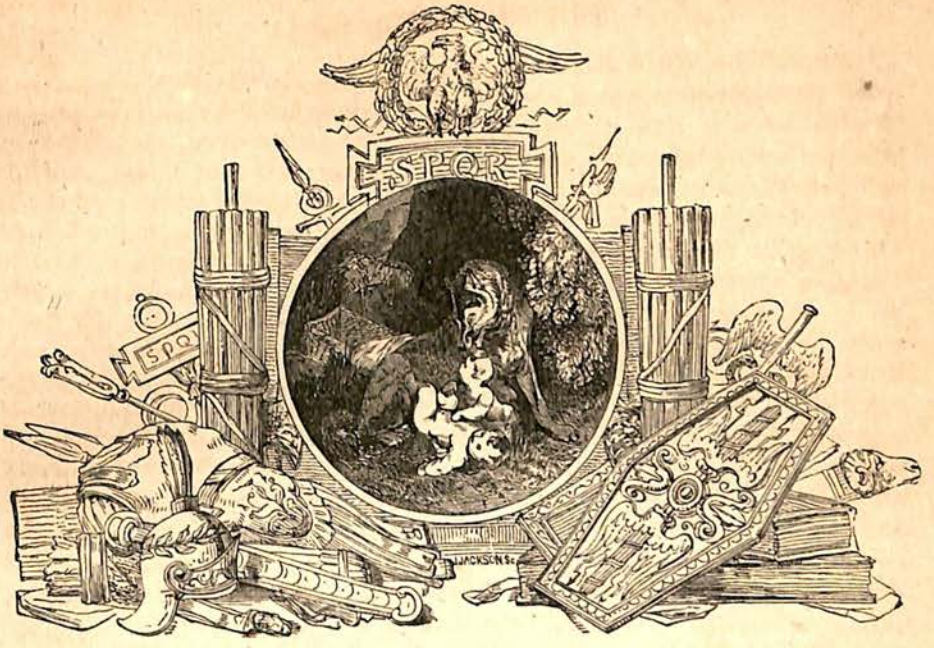




Symbols of Rome.

POPULAR HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

Belief that Albion was once part of the Continent—Legends—The Gauls—Britons assist the Gauls—Druidism in Gaul—Druidism in Britain—The People of Britain—Cæsar's Invasion, B.C. 55—Second Invasion, B.C. 54—The Romans quit Britain, B.C. 54—Condition of the Country after the Roman Invasion—Abury—Stonehenge—The Druidical Assize—Cunobelin.

ALBION was once believed to have been originally a part of the Continent: "That our ISLE of Albion hath been CONTINENT with Gallia hath been the opinion of divers." Thus writes Richard Verstegan, some two centuries ago, and supports "the opinion of divers" with "sundry pregnant reasons." * One very satisfactory reason was pleasantly imagined, a century earlier, by Sir Thomas More: "Howbeit, as they say, and as the fashion of the place itself doth partly show, it was not ever (always) compassed about with the sea. But King Utopus, whose name, as conqueror, the island beareth, even at his arriving and entering upon the land, forthwith obtaining the victory, caused fifteen miles space of uplandish ground, where the sea had no passage, to be cut and digged up; and so wrought the sea round about the land." † If King Utopus (by which name is shadowed forth Brutus, the mythic coloniser of Britain) had not performed this prodigious feat—compared with which a ship-canal through

* Restitution of Decayed Intelligence, chap. iv. 1673. † Utopia, book ii. chap. i.

Darien would be the work of children scratching runnels in the sands—or if some greater power had not willed, in countless ages before Troy fell, and Brutus was a wanderer, that this labour was unnecessary—no History of England would have been written. The Commentaries of Cæsar, our first authentic historian, would have dealt with that small peninsula as a portion of Gaul. The Roman, the Saxon, the Dane, the Norman, would not have struggled for the mastery of THE ISLAND during ten centuries. For four centuries onward, the great mixed nation, which had grown upon the island, would not have gone forth in their ships to crusade or conquest. What is more important, they would not have gradually modelled their own institutions at their own will, and have created a national character, which, at the end of four centuries more, enables them to look back upon a course of unceasing progress, whether of power in the state, or of civilisation in the people. If this sea-bridge had remained, no "nook-shotten isle of Albion" would have planted America, or built up an empire in India, or colonised Australia. The language which is filling the earth would have had no distinct utterance. In the literature of that language we should not have boasted a nobler possession than "the wealth of Ormus or of Ind." The History of England would have been the history of a province.

Our Island History commences with Cæsar. Fables, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's, translated out of the language of Brittany, of a line of kings before the Romans, have left one legend that has become to all a wondrous reality—the story of King Lear. But all these legends, the cherished lore of the Monasteries, were the assured belief of the chivalric ages. Spenser has versified them; Milton has embodied them in stately prose, with a poet's half credulity. No one now craves "to read those books," as the Knights of 'The Faery Queen' desired:—

> "burning both with fervent fire
> Their country's ancestry to understand."

Our genuine ancestry has stirring stories enough for the gratification of the most romantic temper. For, in the real narratives of that ancestry, we not only read, in the very earliest times, of kings, and priests, and mighty warriors, but of a people with strong passions and generous impulses: brave, enduring; dangerous enemies, zealous friends. The first distinct trace of this people is an interesting record of the beginnings of a great nation.

In that portion of Brittany which is now known as the department of Morbihan, dwelt a maritime tribe, whom Cæsar describes as the Veneti. The Morbihan, or Little Sea, is a gulf, navigable, amidst shoals and sand-banks, to Vannes—a name derived from the Roman name of the inhabitants. The towns of this dangerous coast, where the storms of the Atlantic render even modern navigation very difficult, were built, according to Cæsar, upon promontories and tongues of shore almost inaccessible, defying a land force when the tide was at flood, and secure that hostile ships would be stranded at the ebb. The hardy race living on this sea-board had a navy of no contemptible character. Their vessels were of small draught, so as to navigate the land-locked shallows; and yet so strongly built as to dare the tempests of the great ocean. The Veneti traded with Britain. In all probability they had a common language with the natives of our southern coasts; unquestionably they had a common religion. Cæsar had overrun the greater part of

Gaul; but the Veneti defied him, and seized his envoys who were commissioned to procure corn. The vigorous Roman built a fleet on the Loire, and prepared to march into the revolted country. The Veneti sent for succour to Britain, and the Britons answered the call. They came, no doubt, in strong boats, such as Cæsar described the Veneti to possess, with flat bottoms, and high prows, and sails made of hides,—boats which would bear the fury of the gales between the Lizard's Point and the Bay of Biscay. They came to resist oppression, without a fear of being themselves oppressed. They knew of the power of Rome from the merchants who trafficked with them for the produce of their tin-mines; but in their island strength they had no dread of their own subjugation. The Roman poet called them, "the Britons almost separated from the whole world." "What greater barrier is there," said Titus to the Jews, "than the wall of the ocean by which the Britons are surrounded?" * In that wall they placed their security. But the barrier that rolled between them and the European continent was even then their great highway. They sailed to the aid of the Veneti; and by this fearless generosity brought down upon themselves the vengeance of Cæsar, after he had made a conquest of their allies.

Julius Cæsar.

Of the masterly description which the conqueror of Gaul has left of the people of that region, very much applies to the people of Britain, of whom his pictures are less minute. The peculiar characteristics of our own islanders are tolerably well established by various testimony. In the religious condition of the Gauls and the Britons there was no difference. There was little difference, perhaps, in their civil state.

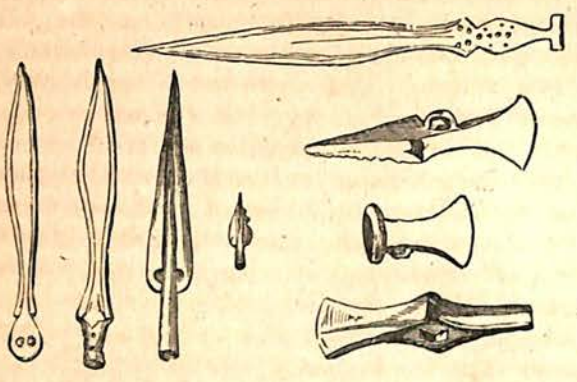
Very near the confluence of the river Auray with the waters of the Morbihan, is the plain of Carnac, where stands a vast monument of the days of Druidism; larger far than Stonehenge, but of less finished construction. The common road passes between rows of high stones for half a mile: and of these rows there are eleven, the separate stones having intervals of about fifteen paces. Of this stupendous work there still stand four thousand stones. The district is full of other works of man which we call Druidical. Even at the beginning of this century the religion of the simple people of that stormy coast was associated with the legends of the antique worship. Once a year priests came in a boat to say mass over the remains of an engulphed city, where great blocks of stone, held to be relics of Druidical temples, were to be seen at low water.† And the people in their fishing-boats gathered round the priests, and the voice of prayer went up to Heaven—a voice of solemn memorial to ancestors whose faith still lingered amidst a purer worship, as the mistletoe of the Druidical oaks still mingles with the evergreens of Christmas. "The system of Druidism," says Cæsar, "is thought to have been formed in Britain, and from thence carried over into Gaul; and now those who wish to be more accurately versed in it go to Britain, in order to become acquainted with it."

"Nothing in the early existence of Britain indicated the greatness which

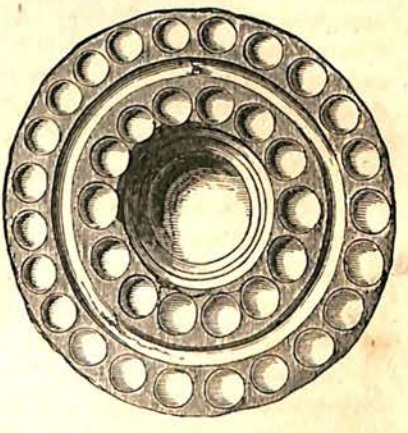
* Flavius Josephus, lib. ii. c. 16.

† P. Chevalier, La Bretagne, p. 639.

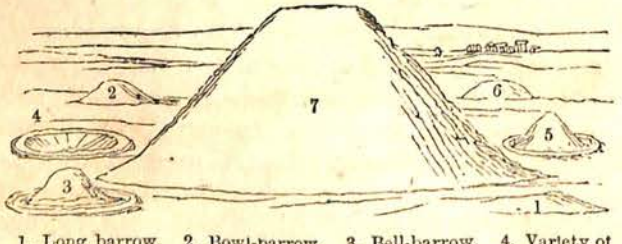
she was destined to attain."* Thus writes the most eloquent historian of our own day. It has been too hastily supposed that mere savages peopled this Britain in her early existence. The Britons, as known to the Romans, were a people of high courage, disciplined and obedient to authority, and yet impatient of subjection; not unacquainted with some important arts of life; exchanging commodities for money of copper and iron; mining and smelting their native tin; possessing an agriculture not wholly unscientific, for they understood the process of marling, and raised cattle in great numbers:—a naval people, with boats, and probably vessels of burden, sailing far away into a tempestuous sea; a warlike people, with swords and shields and chariots, that could not be fabricated without some mechanical knowledge; a religious people, building temples of gigantic proportions, and raising memorials of the dead in earth-works that rival the wonders of modern engineering. Their priests were their lawgivers, and the great ministers of whatever moral or material civilisation they possessed; and we see that the most perfect element of the learning of the priests was considered to exist in Britain. Were these teachers and lawgivers surrounded by few votaries and subjects? "The population is very great, and the buildings very numerous," says Cæsar. All merely savage nations never replenish a land, because they never subdue it to their use.



British Weapons of bronze.



Shield in the British Museum.



1. Long barrow. 2. Bowl-barrow. 3. Bell-barrow. 4. Variety of Druid barrow. 5. Cone-barrow. 6. Broad-barrow. 7. Silbury Hill.

"The system of Druidism" has been minutely described by Cæsar. The Druids were the ministers of sacred things. The young resorted to them for instruction They were the arbiters of disputes, the judges of crime; and men under their interdict were held accursed, and were banished from human intercourse.

* Macaulay, History of England, chap. i.

Over this body one chief Druid presided. The Druids were exempt from military service, and from the payment of taxes. Their instructions were oral. They held that after death the soul does not perish. Their sacrifices were brutal; for they offered up criminals to propitiate the gods, and if criminals were wanting they sacrificed the innocent. Their teaching was not confined to their own worship. They discoursed of the heavenly bodies and of their motions,—of the extent of the world, and the people of distant climes. But there was another Order with power and privilege—the Equestrian. The Knights had armed followers, as the Druids had studious disciples. There were Bards also who sang the praises of their heroes, even as Sir Philip Sidney heard the old song of Percy and Douglas sung by some blind crowder—for the crowd, or rote, a wheel striking on strings, was the instrument of these our ancestral lyrists. But the great mass of the people were dependent upon the two privileged Orders, at least in Gaul, and were oppressed by grievous exactions—the vassals of hard task-masters. The land, however, being divided amongst many tribes, under chieftains with royal authority and military command, there was probably a species of clanship, in which there was servitude on one hand, and protection on the other. Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary of Cæsar, says that the Britons, whom he describes as simple in their manners, and frugal in their modes of living, "have many kings and princes, and for the most part live peaceably together." However brave, and however cruel in the debasing custom of human sacrifice, their passions were under subjection to their intellectual leaders. Diodorus says of the Gauls, "not only in the concerns of peace, but even of war, not friends alone, but even enemies also, chiefly defer to them [the Druids] and to the composers of verses. Frequently, during hostilities, when armies are approaching each other with swords drawn and lances extended, these men rushing between them put an end to their contentions, taming them as they would tame wild beasts."* Ptolemy, the Geographer, who flourished about a century and a half after the Romans had become acquainted with Britain, describes its

Roman Standard Bearers

* Hist., lib. v. c. 31.

inhabitants as "impatient of restraint, and fond of liberty; warlike, laborious, fierce and imperious, ingenious and high-spirited." * The Roman writers who have told the stirring story of their conquest, have exhibited, with a just admiration, some heroic examples of this national character.

Upon the shores, then, of this our Britain, in the latter part of the summer of the year 55 before the birth of the Redeemer, appeared a mighty fleet crossing the narrow sea from a port between Calais and Boulogne. Nineteen hundred years ago, on those chalk cliffs whence the coast-guard now watches the steam-boat threading its rapid way over the channel, stood the solitary fisherman, amazed at the sight of eighty ships of burden, and vessels with oars, bearing upon a land whose natural harbours had as yet given shelter but to the petty barks of foreign traffickers,—the exchangers of copper for tin, and of ornaments for oysters. He might know that ambassadors and hostages had been sent to Cæsar; he might know that his countrymen had fought against the Roman, and that vengeance was threatened. It was now at hand. The alarm went inland through many a tribe. The four princes of the Cantii, or men of Kent, rapidly gathered their followers. Nearer and nearer came the galleys. And now the gazers from the cliffs could descry the legionaries and their ensigns. The armed natives crowded to the heights, shouting defiance from their natural defences. There was risk in encountering a fierce people at such a point. Cæsar had acquired some information of the character of the coast; and he turned his prows northward. Between Walmer and Sandwich the flat beach offered a safer place to plant the foot of a conqueror. The ten thousand soldiers on board the ships saw the beach crowded with horses and chariots, and skin-clothed and painted infantry, with great pointless swords, and small shields, howling in contempt, or encouraging each other with songs of battle. The Romans hesitated; but the standard-bearer of the tenth legion leaped from one of the galleys into the water, with the cry of "Follow me." Then met the British and the Roman arm in mortal conflict;—but discipline made good a landing against obstinate courage.

The Britons retreating before the legions, Cæsar advanced into the interior, and encamped, according to some writers, on Barham Downs. The great Consul had no desire to remain in the country, and he contemplated wintering in Gaul. He was ready, therefore, to conclude a treaty with the invaded tribes. But a storm arose, and scattered the ships which were bringing the Roman cavalry to these shores; and a heavy spring tide—an unfamiliar phenomenon to the people of the Mediterranean—dashed the transports on the beach, and swamped the lighter galleys. The Britons, encouraged by these misfortunes of their enemy, broke the peace. Cæsar says the Britons were signally defeated. He hastily repaired his ships, and sailed to the opposite shore, even without hostages. But early in the next year he returned, with a greater armament, to a sterner conflict. Again he landed on the flat shores of Kent, now undefended; and he marched forward to meet those whom he describes as the inland people, who, "for the most part, do not sow corn, but live on milk and flesh, and have their clothing of skins." The people of Cantium either left his passage free, or made no effectual

* De Judiciis, lib. ii. c. 3.

resistance on the sea-marshes: but when he arrived at a river, most probably the Stour, he saw the rising ground behind occupied by the natives. His cavalry drove them into the woods.

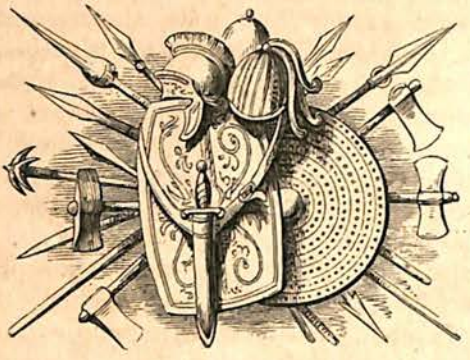
Plutarch has an anecdote which he gives for the purpose of showing "the good-will and devotion of Cæsar's soldiers to him," but which also shows the nature of the resistance which he encountered in his invasion of Britain: "In Britannia, on one occasion, the natives had attacked the foremost centurions who had got into a marshy spot full of water, upon which, in the presence of Cæsar, who was viewing the contest, a soldier rushed into the midst of the enemy, and after performing many conspicuous acts of valour, rescued the centurions from the barbarians, who took to flight. The soldier, with difficulty attempting to cross after all the rest, plunged into the muddy stream, and with great trouble, and the loss of his shield, sometimes swimming, sometimes walking, he got safe over." * The marshes were familiar to the Britons in a period long after that of Cæsar. A later historian says, "Many parts of the British country, being constantly flooded by the tides of the ocean, become marshy."† The marshes remain where the tides of the ocean still contend against the labour of man.

Again a tempest arose; and Cæsar returned to the coast. Meanwhile a leader had sprung up, who had marched some eighty miles from the country divided by the Thames from the maritime states; and he, Cassivelaunus, or Caswallon, gathered his once hostile neighbours round his war-chariot, and showed a bold front to the Roman masses. Pressed by the invader, he fought his way back to his own territories; and, having crossed the Thames, he endeavoured to stop Cæsar's advance by fixing sharp stakes in the bed of the river at the only fordable point. Bede, called the Venerable—the most interesting and trustworthy of our Saxon historians—writing in the eighth century, says, "An immense multitude of the enemy had posted themselves on the farthest side of the river, under the conduct of Cassibelan, and fenced the bank of the river, and almost all the ford under water, with sharp stakes; the remains of which stakes are to be there seen to this day, and they appear to the beholders to be about the thickness of a man's thigh, and, being cased with lead, remain immoveable, fixed in the bottom of the river." A part of the river, near Oatlands, is called Coway-stakes even now; and there to *this* day in the bed of the river the stakes remain, formed of the bodies of young oak trees. The map of England will show how direct a course it was from the country about Canterbury to the Thames near Walton, without following the course of the river above London. Having crossed the Thames, Cæsar would march with no obstacle, from the nature of the country, upon the capital of Cassivelaunus—St. Alban's, in the territory of the Cassi, from whom we probably derive the name of Cassio-hundred. According to his own account, the people whom he encountered in his progress were the Cantii of Kent, the Trinobantes of Essex,

Augustus.

* Life of Cæsar, s. 16, Mr. Long's translation in "Civil Wars of Rome." † Herodian.

the Cenimagni of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge; the Segontiaci, the Ancalites, and the Bibroci of Hants, Berks, and Wilts; and the Cassi. Cæsar represents his second landing as a conquest, and that the tribes one by one submitted. But the invaders quitted the country the same year, and went back to Gaul. Hostages he carried with him. Captives he might have taken to adorn his triumph. But he is recorded to have exhibited no trophies beyond a corslet of British pearls. Cæsar did not conquer Britain, says Tacitus, but only showed it to the Romans. It was ninety-seven years before another invasion was attempted. In the course of that period there was peaceful communication with Rome; and the whole island, according to Strabo, became "intimate and familiar to the Romans." But the people were as free as if Cæsar had never landed.



British and Roman weapons.

In this interval of our History, which it would be useless as well as tedious to attempt to fill up with any of the apocryphal annals of British princes, let us imagine a Roman peacefully traversing the island, and making himself "intimate and familiar" with the face of the country and the customs of the people. Let us take the period of Cunobelin, the Cymbeline of Shakspere, who was brought up at the court of Augustus, and lived at the time of the accession of Caligula.

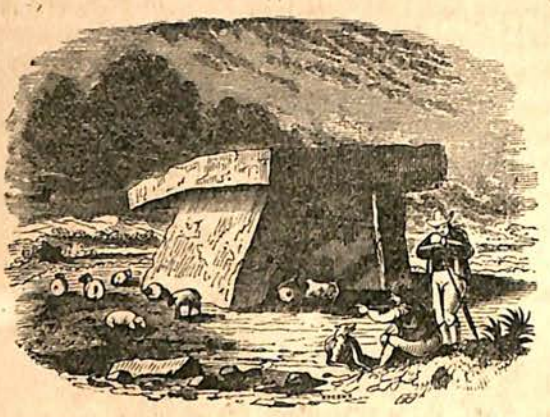
In passing from the coast to the interior, and traversing the island, it is not easy to believe that before the Roman dominion this was a country without roads. "King Dunwallo," says Fabyan, the chronicler, "called also Molmucius or Mulmutius, began the four highways of Britain." These, according to the same authority, were perfected by Belinus, his son, "who caused workmen to be called, and set them to pave with stone the said ways, that they might sufficiently be known to all way-goers or travellers." This is tradition—always doubtful and uncertain. The learned Camden has no faith in roads before the Romans. But the celerity of Cæsar's own military movements; the four thousand chariots which Cassivelaunus is recorded to have opposed to his progress, render it impossible to imagine that the country could have been so penetrated without roads. The marshy nature of the coast lands rendered roads absolutely necessary for communication; and some lands of the interior continued marshy when the Romans had been settled in Britain for a century. The British roads and the Roman roads alike indicate the character of the country. The British generally run along the chain of hills, throwing out lateral branches, as if to adjacent towns. The Roman, often elevated by great labour like a modern railway, run for the most part in a direct line from station to station. The natives availed themselves of the natural advantages of an undulating country to pass from place to place; the Romans saw that art and industry would convert the marshy places into firm causeways. Thus, then, following the

windings of the hills, and occasionally descending to the plains, where there would be sometimes thick woods, through which the roads passed,—and sometimes corn-fields contiguous to the roads, where the laden cart moved the produce to the towns, crossing little streams at pebbly fords, —would the stranger advance through a varied region. He would find the towns situated in a tract of woody country, surrounded by a deep trench, and defended by felled trees. The houses would show the same poor appearance which Caractacus alluded to when a captive at Rome: "Why do ye, who possess such numerous and durable edifices, covet our humble cottages?"* There were, perhaps, more durable habitations even then in Britain than wattled huts. Chun Castle, in Cornwall, with granite walls of prodigious thickness, is held to have been such a British work. The inhabitants of these wooded villages would be agricultural or pastoral, according to the nature of the soil. The corn-growers of the island would show the Roman, in peaceful confidence, their subterranean granaries. Diodorus Siculus says, "They gathered in the harvest by cutting off the ears of corn, and storing them in subterraneous repositories." They were a people who evidently had some great principle of association in their industry as in their religion. Passing through Kent, the stranger would see such pits near Crayford, narrow at the mouth, like a well; but at the bottom spreading out into large vaulted chambers, one within another, supported by chalk pillars. In the estuaries, the Roman would observe the oyster-dredgers, whose labours supplied the luxurious tables of Rome, as well as their own simple boards. There, too, would be the mussel-seekers, now and then finding a pearl in the shell of a peculiar species. In the small streams would be seen the fisher in his coracle, rowing swiftly with one hand, and managing his lines with the other, even as the dweller on the Wye fishes at this day. On the rivers, on lakes, and on the coast, would be canoes of transit, carrying on a traffic of commodities, rudely and imperfectly, no doubt, but still the beginnings of a higher civilisation, whose great elements are communication and interchange. Such a boat was found in 1834, in a creek of the river Arun. Hunters, too, he would see, chasing the hart, and the boar, and the bear, with small, lean, and shaggy dogs, as Oppian, a Greek poet of the second century, has described them, with blinking eyes

Gaulish Huts—From the Antonine Column.

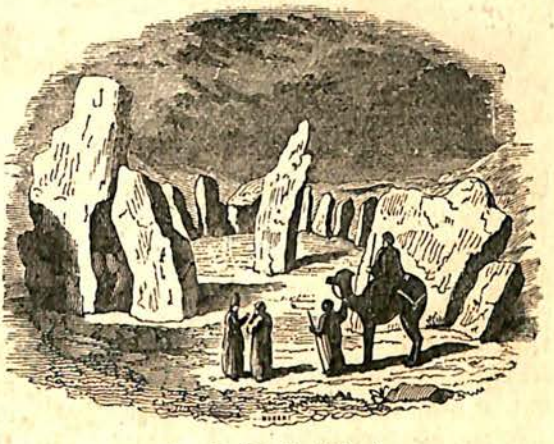
* Zonaræ Annalium, lib. xi.

and matchless scent. Wherever the stranger went he would find a people not devoid of energy. Their cold and uncertain climate compelled a laborious perseverance to secure the means of life.



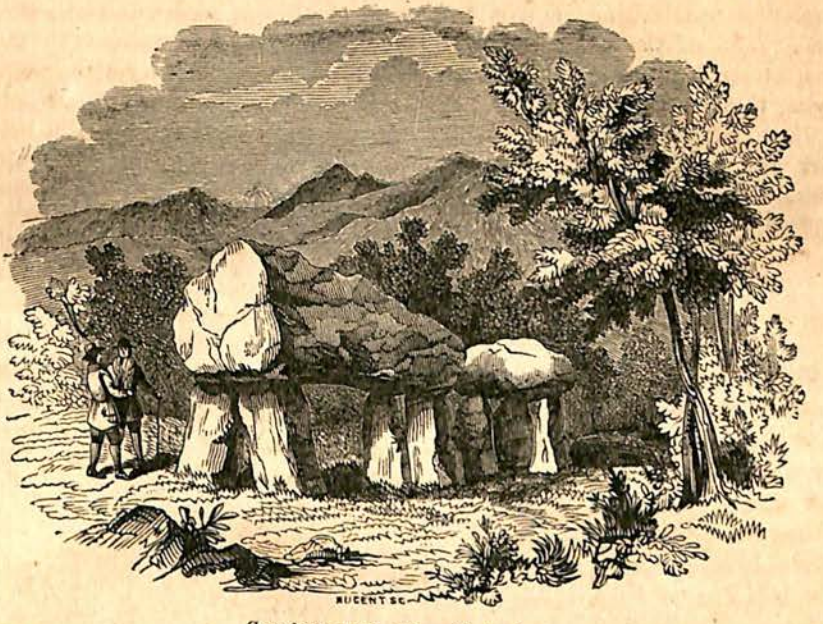
Kit's Coty House.

The Roman visitor, as he proceeded inland, would be struck by some of the monuments of a rough but grand art which we are accustomed to regard as belonging to the religious rites of the Britons. As the popular faith of the Greeks and Romans was associated with the beautiful, that of Britain was connected with the vast; and these erections, the results of great physical and mechanical power, were held to be the works of giants or spiritual beings. Of their peculiar uses we now know little or nothing. Near Aylesford, in Kent, the traveller in our day may step a short distance from the road and see Kit's Coty House—three large stones placed upright, the least stone being inclosed in the side ones, with a fourth stone laid flat over the three, leaving a space within where men can stand. There are similar monuments on the banks of the Jordan; at Darab, in Persia; and in the principality of Serapur, in India. We call these buildings in England cromlechs; and it is said they were erected for the purpose of human sacrifice. The Roman traveller would confide in the assertion of Cæsar that these sacrifices were frequent, and the victims numerous; and the people amongst whom he sojourned would not shrink from narrating the immolation of criminals as a laudable custom, even as their civilised descendants have approved of legalised slaughter for many offences which are now dealt with more mercifully. If he passed on to the great chalk downs of Wiltshire, he would see a vast tract of open country, whose chief features have probably undergone little change during more than eighteen hundred years. A road, acknowledged to be British, still crosses Salisbury Plain into Berkshire. A vast earthen rampart called Wansdyke extends for miles—a supposed defence of one tribe against another. If it were possible to imagine that our England of the nineteenth century should, in the lapse of ages, become again a country of dense woods and impervious marshes—if the



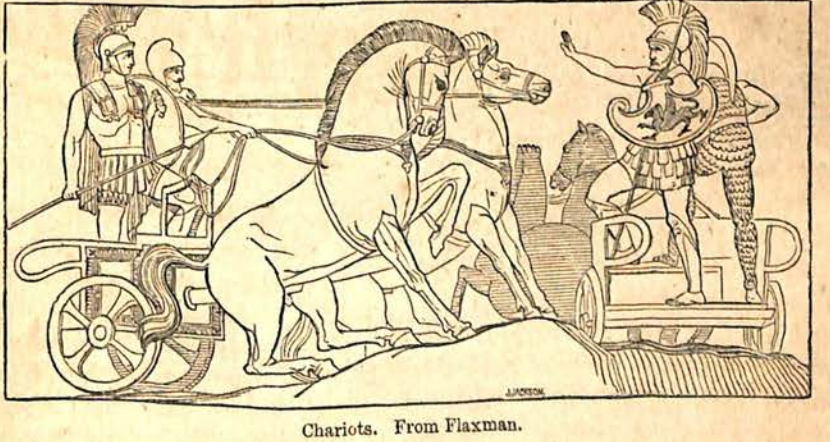
Druidical Circle at Darab.

record of our arts should perish, and our literature be as forgotten as the songs of the old British bards—some antiquary might speculate upon our railway cuttings and embankments, and hold that they were for purposes of warlike communication. In Wiltshire there are deep covered-ways or lines of communication from one British town to another, with broad dykes and



Cromlech at Plas Newydd, Anglesey.

banks of equal height on each side. Speaking of the people of this island at the time of the Roman invasion, Southey says, "The ferocity of their manners, little as is otherwise known of them, is sufficiently shown by their scythed war-chariots, and the fact that in the open country the path from one town to



Chariots. From Flaxman.

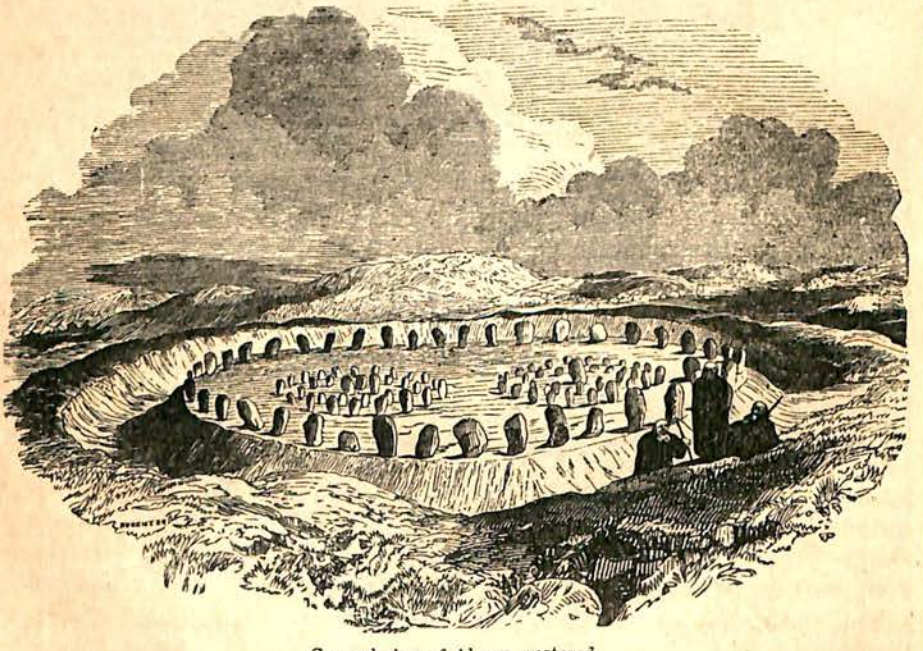
another was by a covered-way."* The covered-ways and war-chariots tell of something more than ferocity of manners. Burke, though disclaiming a belief in any great amount of what we call civilisation amongst the British

* Colloquies, vol. i. p. 64.

tribes, candidly says, "I cannot help thinking it something extraordinary, and not easily to be accounted for, that the Britons should have been so expert in the fabric of those chariots, when they seem utterly ignorant in all other mechanic arts." * If the Roman stranger came amongst these covered-ways, and saw the war-chariots driven along them in some great gathering for civil or religious celebration, he would recollect Cæsar's description of the British *essedæ;* and of the mode in which the charioteers would drive their horses down steep descents, rush onward to meet their enemy, and, sometimes, leaving their chariots, fight on foot, man to man. But the Roman would also recollect that such was the practice of the warriors of Homer; and he would think the people not quite so barbarous as Rome believed. He would compare their mode of fighting with that of Hector, who, when dyke and wall opposed the passage of his chariots,

> "Full-arm'd betook him to the ground;
> And then all left their chariots when he was seen to lead,
> Rushing about him, and gave up each chariot and steed,
> To their directors." †

Towards the northern extremity of the Wiltshire downs is the great temple of Abury,—a circle of enormous stones, enclosing an area of twenty-



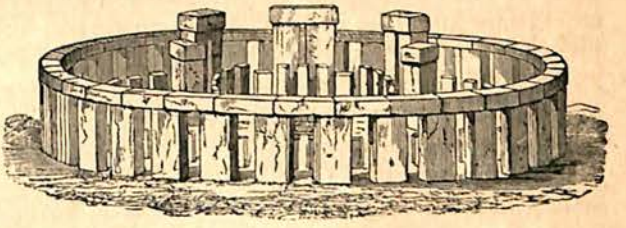
General view of Abury—restored.

eight acres, within which were two other circles. Year after year have these mighty blocks been broken up for building; but the plan of this vast amphitheatre can be distinctly traced. Near this monument is Silbury Hill, the largest artificial mound in Europe. The Roman might learn the history of this magnificent mound, in whose formation thousands must have laboured for some great common object, some heart-stirring purpose, some form of

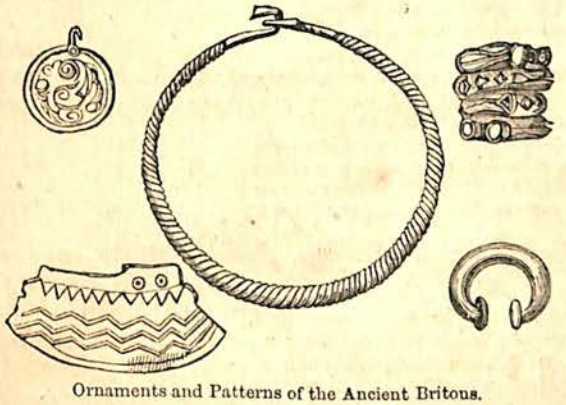
* English History, chap. ii.

† Iliad, book xii., Chapman's translation.

hero-worship, some elevating impulse of reverence. Wandering amidst these plains, the stranger would perpetually meet with sepulchral mounds, now called barrows. Here, in the tumuli where generation after generation were gathered, we still find the relics of old British art, such as the Roman might have observed, as ornaments of the person, or conveniences of the household, or weapons of war. Here are dug up, flint and bronze arrow-heads and spear-heads, bodkins, necklaces, and beads, urns and drinking-cups. The plains would look to him, as they do at this day, as a vast unpeopled region. But in truth, the district is not level, but presents a succession of ridge upon ridge, with little cultivated valleys, where the abodes of man are hidden. The scene probably presented the same character in the early times — a pastoral district thickly populated, —the seat of a central religion and government. In the heart of these plains is Stonehenge—once a perfect structure of huge materials symmetrically arranged. Cæsar says of the priests and judges of Gaul, "These Druids hold a meeting at a certain time of the year in a consecrated spot in the country of the Carnutes (people in the neighbourhood of Chartres), which country is considered to be in the centre of all Gaul. Hither assemble all, from every part, who have a litigation, and submit themselves to their determination and sentence." Stonehenge might have exhibited such an assize to the Roman visitor. From the great British towns of Silchester and Winchester, pilgrims might have poured across the plains by the roads which led direct to them. At twenty miles distant was Abury. The town and hill-fort of Sarum was close at hand. The solitude which now reigns around Stonehenge might have been broken



Stonehenge.—Perspective Elevation, restored.



Ornaments and Patterns of the Ancient Britons.

Urns and Drinking-cups.

by the tramp of multitudes, when the Roman traveller crossed these downs. He might probably encounter some wretched victim of the stern Druidical laws, who had been judged at this assize—a wandering outcast from society—an offender for whom life would have no further solace, even if life could be preserved in desert places, where he might herd with the fox and the wolf; for such penalties waited upon the offenders whose lives were spared by the sentence of the priestly lawgivers. They were cut off from fire and fuel. In the lapse of a century or two a milder worship and a more merciful law were to be the lot of the British people. Christianity was to come for a little while: and afterwards a long night of barbarism, till it again returned to the coast of Kent, and the light shone in darkness, never again to be extinguished. But of those who brought Christianity to these lands, in the early days of which we have spoken, there is no record. Our poet, Wordsworth, alludes to the conjectures that belong to this unsolved question.

"Wandering through the West
Did holy Paul awhile in Britain dwell,
And call the Fountain forth by miracle,
And with dread signs the nascent stream invest?
Or He, whose bonds dropp'd off, whose prison doors
Flew open, by an Angel's voice unbarr'd?
Or some of humbler name to these wild shores
Storm-driven, who, having seen the cup of woe
Pass from their Master, sojourn'd here to guard
The precious current they had taught to flow?"

These questions cannot be answered. Enough, that the stream has long flowed *for us:*

"That stream upon whose bosom we have pass'd,
Floating at ease, while nations have effaced
Nations, and Death has gather'd to his fold
Long lines of mighty kings."

In the early intercourse of Rome with Britain, the southern and eastern coasts were probably known to the strangers most completely, if not exclusively: but in subsequent periods the midland and northern districts became familiar to them, in a series of tremendous struggles with the hardy people. Cunobelin, one of the few famous of British names, was the most powerful of the kings before the invasion of Claudius. Nearly a century had elapsed between the invasion of Cæsar and that period, and the government of the country had manifestly sustained great changes. The separate dominion of many petty chieftains had been merged in that of kings, each ruling over large parts of the island. Cunobelin was king of the Trinobantes, whose territory embraced a large portion of South Britain. His capital, Camalodunum, is now considered, by most antiquarian authorities, to have been Colchester, or the immediate neighbourhood. It was favourably situated for maritime communication by the estuary of the Colne. That Cunobelin was surrounded by some attributes of a later civilisation may be gathered from the various coins of his reign which still exist. There are earlier coins, some bearing the name of Tasciovanus, supposed to be the father of Cunobelin. The numerous coins of the king of the Trinobantes were once thought to be of Roman workmanship they undoubtedly

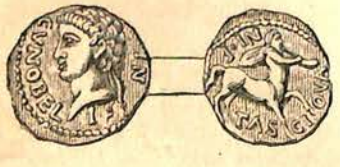
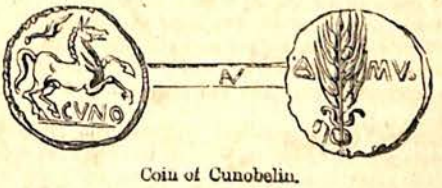


exhibit an acquaintance with the mythology of Rome, and with Roman customs: on the reverse of some of them we see Apollo, Hercules, Pegasus, Medusa; on others we have types of British productiveness—a pig and an ear of barley.* There is abundant evidence that the great idea of imperial Rome was familiar to the rulers of England, although they were yet free from her chain.

* It is now held by many numismatists that the Britons practised the art of coining previous to the Roman invasion. In the received editions of Cæsar's Commentaries there is this passage:—"Utuntur aut ære aut taleis ferreis ad certum pondus examinatis, pro nummo;" from which it is inferred that the Britons determined the value of pieces of metal by their weight, having no coinage. Mr. Hawkins has discovered that the passage in Cæsar was altered in the seventeenth century, and that all the principal manuscripts of Cæsar give the passage thus:—"Utuntur aut ære aut nummo aureo aut annulis ferreis ad certum pondus examinatis pro nummo;" from which is derived the opposite conclusion—that they had brass and gold money. See 'Remarks on the Ancient British Coins,' in Monumenta Historica Britannica, p. cii.



Coin of Cunobelin.

Roman Victory.

CHAPTER II.

Caligula's mock triumph, A.D. 40—Expedition of Plautius, A.D. 43—Arrival of Claudius in Britain—Camalodunum—Temple of Claudius—Roman estimate of the British People—Defeat of Caractacus, A.D. 50—Attack of Suetonius upon Mona, A.D. 61—Revolt of Boadicea—Destruction of British Cities—Defeat of Boadicea—Consulship of Agricola, A.D. 78—Defeat of Galgacus, A.D. 84—Hadrian: his Wall, A.D. 120—Severus, A.D. 208—Death of Severus, A.D. 211.

"WHY tribute? Why should we pay tribute? If Cæsar can hide the sun from us with a blanket, or put the moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light; else, sir, no more tribute." * The dramatic poet has faithfully interpreted the spirit of the Britons in their dealings with Rome, after the generation had passed away which had witnessed the might of the great Julius. The island was, no doubt, under the shadow of the eagle's wing, but there was no homage, and no violence. "There was a long oblivion of Britain," says Tacitus.†

In the fortieth year of the Christian era, and ninety-five years after the invasion of Cæsar, Adminius, a son of Cunobelin, who had been banished by his father, placing himself under the authority of Caligula, instigated an invasion of his native country. During the previous reign of Tiberius there had been courteous intercourse between Britain and Rome; for the soldiers of Germanicus, who were shipwrecked on the British shore, were rescued and sent home by the islanders. Caligula, one of those monstrous examples which all history, and the Roman especially, presents, of an insane will united with an unbridled power, hastily resolved—abandoning the war which he was carrying on in Germany—upon a causeless invasion of Britain. He marched

* Cymbeline, act iii., sc. 1.

† It is unnecessary to refer to the numerous passages of Tacitus which form the chief authority for many of the facts of this chapter.

his legions to Boulogne; he embarked in a stately galley; and, having looked upon the white cliffs as he sailed a little way from the shore, he returned to the port, and, ascending a throne, commanded his troops to gather all the shells of the beach, and bear them in triumph to Rome, as "the spoils of the ocean." One monument of this folly remained for ages. On a cliff near the entrance of the port stood, till the year 1644, a Roman lighthouse, held to have been the building which Caligula is asserted to have set up on this occasion. In that year the cliff was undermined by the sea, and the lighthouse fell. At Dover there was a corresponding Roman pharos. The remains of each carry us back to the time when the masters of the world, amidst the pride and luxury of their ambitious empire, left the foot-prints of a great civilisation wherever they trod. They marked their course by works of utility. The Roman historians despised Caligula, his ocean-spoils and his lofty throne. But his pageant was to be played over again with a nearer approach to a stern reality. Seventeen hundred and sixty-four years after Caligula's survey of the coasts, came to the same spot another young emperor, flushed with power; and there he encamped his legions, and prepared his rafts for a mighty invasion. Suetonius tells the story of Caligula:*

Caligula.

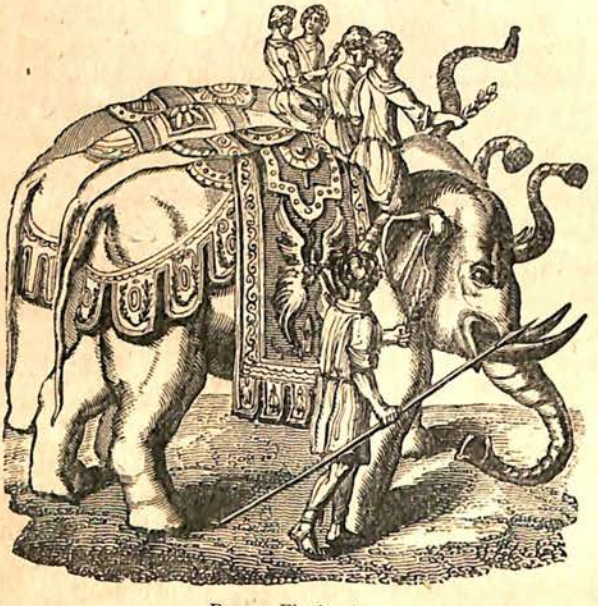
Thiers that of Napoleon.† The parallel is somewhat remarkable. In the centre of an amphitheatre, on the margin of the sea, was erected a throne for the French emperor. Before it, "after the model of the Roman people assembled in their vast arenas," were ranged the various corps of the army in close columns; and as the hero distributed rewards, the chosen "swore to shed their blood on the coast of England, to assure to their country, and to the man who governed it, the uncontested empire of the world." The camp broke up, almost as hastily as Caligula's. A useless column remains to tell of the modern pageant.

Claudius.

The mock triumph of Caligula had soon to be succeeded by a real struggle. Claudius became emperor; and he was stirred up to the hazard of an invasion of Britain by discontented fugitives from the power of the native rulers. He resolved to make Britain a province of the empire; and selected Aulus Plautius

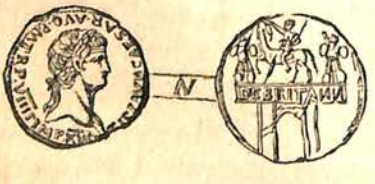
* Cap. 46. † Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire, livre xx.

to cross the sea with an army from Gaul. At first he had to encounter a mutinous soldiery. A century had nearly elapsed since the Roman arm had come into conflict with the British. The popular opinion was that the Britons were a fierce people, beyond the bounds of the habitable world, whom Cæsar had vainly attempted to subdue, and who refused tribute to Augustus. The contemptible termination of Caligula's expedition might have been the result of similar forebodings amongst his legions. The troops of Plautius at last consented to embark. They were divided into three bodies, so as to land at several points. They were anxious and dispirited; but at length the Roman courage was aroused by the Roman superstition. As the fleet was coasting from east to west a meteor travelled over their course, shooting flames from the east, as if to indicate the point to which they should navigate. They landed without opposition; "for the Britons," says Dion Cassius, "from what they had learned, not expecting that they would come, had not assembled together; nor even when they arrived did they attack them, but fled to the marshes and woods, hoping to wear them out by delay; and that, as had happened under Julius Cæsar, they would go back without effecting their purpose." *



Roman Elephants.

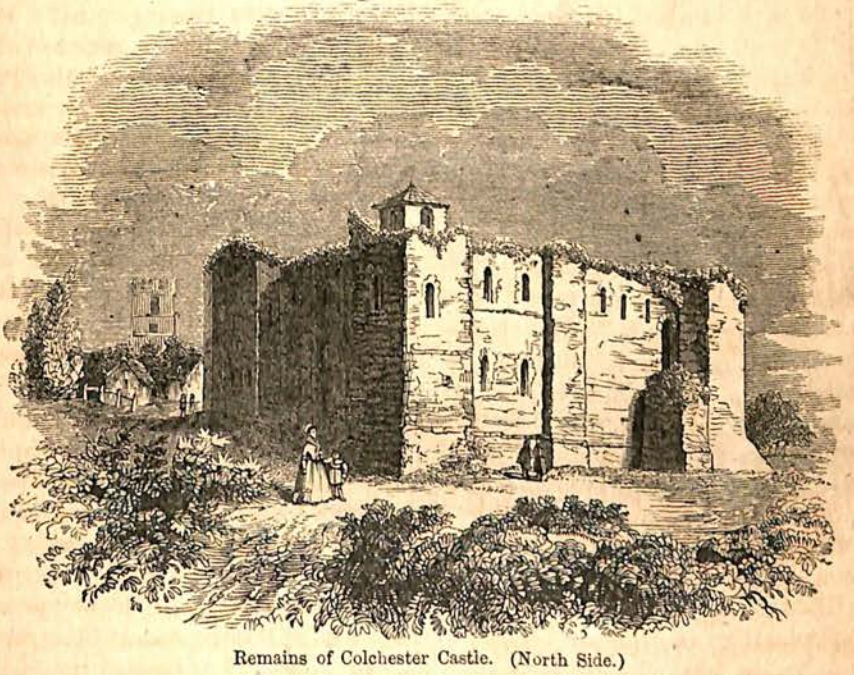
During the reign of Caligula, Cunobelin had died; and his two sons, Caractacus and Togodumnus, succeeded to his power. It was against these princes that Plautius directed his attacks. There was the same course of strategy on the part of the invaded as in the time of Cæsar. They fancied themselves secure when they could place a river, of which they knew the fords, between themselves and their enemy. But the Romans had expert swimmers in their ranks, who, again and again, surprised the too confident natives, and drove them onward to their marshes. In the treacherous swamps and the pathless woods, large bodies of the Romans themselves perished; and Plautius, in the midst of victories, became irresolute, and sent for succour to his Emperor. Togodumnus had fallen; Caractacus remained to brave the imperial power. Claudius comes:—"He who waited ready with a huge preparation, as if not safe, though amidst the flower of all his Romans, like a great Eastern



* Dion Cassius, lib. lx.

king, with armed elephants marches through Gallia. So full of peril was this enterprise esteemed, as not without all this equipage, and stronger terrors than Roman armies, to meet the native and the naked British valour defending their country." * Caractacus had retreated to the west. Claudius having, after his landing, joined his forces to those of Plautius, marched with an overwhelming power upon Camalodunum. His expedition to Britain was more a parade than a conquest. He was only sixteen days in the island. The army saluted him with the title of Imperator; and he returned to Rome, to assume the name of Britannicus, and to be worshipped as a god. The memory of his Britannic triumph is preserved upon his coinage.

In the ancient town of Colchester stand the walls of a vast square building, known as the Castle. It is a work of most extraordinary size and solidity, far exceeding in dimensions and strength any of the Norman keeps, such as



Remains of Colchester Castle. (North Side.)

those of Rochester and London. The Roman tile is imbedded, with considerable regularity, in many parts of the wall; and the internal arrangement appears to be essentially different from the remaining examples of Norman defences. A theory therefore has been set up, and supported with great ingenuity, that this is the veritable temple erected by the Roman colonists of Camalodunum, in honour of the deified Claudius. Tacitus, describing the revolt of the Iceni, seventeen years after the invasion of Claudius, repeatedly mentions the Temple of Camalodunum. "They" (the Britons) "regarded the temple erected to the god Claudius as the bulwark of eternal domination;" —"Their substance was devoured by the priests who ministered in the temple;" —"The veterans relied upon the shelter and strength of the temple." Without adopting or controverting the opinion that the Castle of Colchester is the

* Milton. History of England, book ii

actual Temple of Claudius,* the locality itself possesses the highest interest, as one of the principal scenes of that great conflict which, after various fortunes, ultimately placed the whole of South Britain under the power of Rome.

It is extremely difficult minutely to follow the relations of the ancient historians in regard to the localities of the long Roman warfare with the British tribes. Nor is it necessary. We know distinctly that Vespasian, the lieutenant of Plautius, afterwards Emperor, conquered the Isle of Wight; but we also learn, that the success of this General, who subjected twenty towns, was not accomplished without a perpetual struggle. His son, Titus, who in Britain was acquiring that military training which made him the great instrument of the Divine will in the destruction of Jerusalem, is recorded to have saved the life of his father, who was "hemmed in by the barbarians, and in imminent danger of being slain." Although the southern and south-eastern parts of the island were comparatively tranquil, and the Romans could pour in reinforcements along the whole line of the coast, and by the estuaries of the Thames and the Colne, numerous tribes were in arms in the north and the west; and those of the south and east, who had been imperfectly subdued, were ready for new efforts to throw off the yoke. The triumphs which Rome bestowed upon her victorious generals Plautius and Vespasian; the perseverance with which the most ambitious of her sons went again and again to the struggle with the so-called barbarians; are sufficient to show the importance that was attached to this distant empire. The common opinion of the low state of civilisation amongst the people who thus contended with the greatest military power of the world, is amply refuted by the naked facts of this early history. Till Agricola came, with the tranquillising power of the great coloniser superadded to the brute force of the remorseless conqueror, there was a perpetual series of revolts against the invader, more or less national. The stirring histories of Caractacus and Boadicea have furnished subjects for the poet and the painter; and the Roman annalists themselves have been eloquent in their panegyrics of the noble captive and the warrior queen. But, however magnified by the ancient historians may have been the heroism of individual leaders, the character of the people has received ample praise from the most acute and discriminating of Roman writers. According to Tacitus, they were resolute and fierce by nature; they would pay tribute and submit to the Roman levies, but they would bear no insult or injury; they would obey, but they would not be slaves. Assuredly the great composite edifice of the British character has been raised upon very solid foundations.

There is a lofty hill in Shropshire, near the junction of the Clun and the Teme, which still bears the name of Caer-Caradoc, the town of Caradoc. Caradoc was Caractacus. Tacitus has described the fortified place where the British Chieftain met the legions of Ostorius Scapula, after that General had subdued the revolted Iceni, who inhabited Norfolk and Suffolk. The position of Caractacus was on a mountain-ridge, with a wall of stone for a rampart. At the foot of the mountain flowed a river dangerous to be forded, and hosts of men guarded the intrenchments. From the time of that great battle, according to Camden, the place was called Caer-Caradoc. The confederated

* 'Colchester Castle, built by a Colony of Romans as a Temple to their deified Emperor, Claudius Cæsar.' By the Rev. H. Jenkins.

Britons were unable to resist the Roman assault. The Britons fought with arrows, which did terrible execution as the assailants scaled the mountain-sides; but in the hand-to-hand fight which followed, the close order of the disciplined veterans prevailed against the tumultuous onslaughts of the hardy mountaineers. "Signal was this victory," says Tacitus; "the wife and daughters of Caractacus were taken prisoners, and his brothers surrendered to mercy." Caractacus put himself under the protection of Cartismandua, Queen of the Brigantes (the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire), by whom he was betrayed, and delivered up to the Romans. Tacitus says that he had held out against the Romans nine years. The invasion of Claudius took place A.D. 43; the defeat of Caractacus was in the year 50 or 51. The oration of Caractacus before Claudius and Agrippina is probably one of those many passages in which the Roman historians put on the attributes of the poet. Milton has expressed his contempt of such historical embellishments: "I affect not set speeches in a history, unless known for certain to have been so spoken in effect as they are written, nor then, unless worth rehearsal; and to invent such, though eloquently, as some historians have done, is an abuse of posterity, raising in them that read other conceptions of those times and persons than were true." * And yet the speeches which Tacitus puts into the mouths of Caractacus, and Boadicea, and Galgacus, were certainly intended to present true conceptions of times and persons. He lived very near to those times. If he were not in Britain himself, he must have attained the most accurate notions of the condition of the country from his father-in-law Agricola. When, therefore, he makes Caractacus say that he was a prince born of illustrious ancestors, and governing many nations—master of men, and arms, and horses, and riches—he means to exhibit, not the character of a proud savage, but of a high-minded chief of a warlike people,—of the inhabitants of a land abounding in possessions, of which the Romans came to plunder them. The historian mingled the dramatic form with the narrative. The great captive enters Rome, with his servants and followers bearing his war-trappings, and golden collars, and spoils that he had won in his native wars. His wife, and daughter, and brothers followed. But in the triumphal pomp the man himself was the great object of curiosity to the assembled people and the Prætorian bands—he who had so long defied the Imperial power. His renown had gone before him. The noble bearing of Caractacus, according to the historian, saved his life. To Ostorius was decreed a triumph; and the Senate proclaimed the capture of Caractacus as an event no less illustrious than those of past times, when conquered kings were presented to the Roman people, as Syphax was by Publius Scipio, and Perseus by Lucius Paulus. But if Caractacus were

Roman and Captive. (Terra-cotta.)

* History of England, book ii.

spared, other British captives had been offered as sacrifices to the love of ferocious excitement in the Roman people. In the triumph of Plautius, "many foreign freedmen and British captives fought in the gladiatorial combat, numbers of whom he (Claudius) destroyed in this kind of spectacle, and gloried in it." *

The tribes whom Caractacus had led, though scattered, were unsubdued. The Silures, a people of South Wales, continued to make the most obstinate resistance, insomuch that Claudius declared that their very name must be blotted out. Amidst this harassing warfare Ostorius died, worn out with anxiety.

A few years roll on, and Nero wears the Imperial purple. Since Ostorius, there had been two commanders in Britain, Aulus Didius and Veranius. In the year 58, Suetonius Paulinus succeeds to the command. He ruled in tranquillity for two years, when he resolved to attack Mona (the Isle of Anglesey), the great seat of Druidism. Over the Menai Strait, where the railway train now shoots with the rapidity of the hurricane, he transported his infantry in shallow vessels, whilst his cavalry swam across the passage. Tacitus has described the scene which ensued, with his characteristic power. On the shore were armed men in dense array; women with loose hair, running amongst them like furies, clothed in dark robes and bearing lighted torches. The Ate of the poets, with her burning torch and her bloody sword, would seem to be the personification of these terrific women. Surrounding these multitudes were bands of Druids, lifting up their hands to heaven with the most frantic gestures. The Roman soldiers were awe-struck, and with difficulty could be led on to attack such unwonted enemies. The priests, and the women, and the armed hosts, at length fled from the real terrors of an unsparing soldiery; and multitudes perished by sword and fire. "A garrison," says Tacitus, "was afterwards placed amongst the vanquished, and the groves consecrated to their cruel superstition were cut down: for they held it right to smear their altars with the blood of their captives, and to consult the will of the gods by the quivering of human flesh."

In the attack upon Mona, Suetonius was probably impelled by the desire to root out the religious system of the Britons, which was one of the chief causes of their enduring hostility to Rome. The Druidical worship was a deep-rooted belief, long established, and universally adopted. The mythology of the Pantheon was contemptible and odious to those who cultivated a superstition of a more solemn and influential character. It gave them the daring courage and deep revenge of fanaticism. In the revolt of Boadicea, which took place while Suetonius was making his attack upon Mona, the extraordinary impulse which collected a hundred and twenty thousand of the natives in arms was as much given by the insults to their national worship and their sacred places, as by the rapacious extortions and the gross licentiousness of the Roman officials. Boadicea, "bleeding from the Roman rods," stirred the Iceni to vengeance not more than "the temple built and dedicated to the deified Claudius." When the statue of Victory in that temple fell down without any visible violence, and the affrighted Romans of Camalodunum saw terrible omens in the appearances of the tidal lakes, women chanted prophetic denunciations in the streets, and strangers howled

* Dion Cassius.

and murmured in the public places.* Contempt and defiance preceded the work of destruction. If the orations which Dion Cassius has put into the mouth of Boadicea at all represent the real conceptions of times and persons, there was a deep hatred of the Roman character, as exhibited in the soldiers and settlers, which instigated the Britons to the most rash and obstinate resistance. To her "incensed deities" the outraged queen appealed, "against men who are revilers, unjust, insatiable, impious." She despised those who could endure neither hunger nor thirst, nor cold nor heat; who bathed in tepid water, and lived on dressed meats, and drank undiluted wine, and anointed themselves with spikenard. This may be only a denunciation of

Bas-relief from Trajan's Column at Rome.

the Roman luxury, compared with the British simplicity, as it appeared to a writer who was born a century after the revolt of Boadicea. In the same way there may be great exaggeration when he paints her "of the largest size, most terrible of aspect, most savage of countenance, harsh of voice; having a profusion of yellow hair which fell down to her hips, and wearing a large golden collar; a parti-coloured floating vest drawn close about her bosom, over this a thick mantle connected by a clasp, and in her hand a spear." Tacitus, a contemporary, says nothing of her ferocious aspect. He relates her injuries, and the terrible retribution inflicted upon the Romans and their allies by the multitudes whom she led. Their chief objects of attack were the towns of Camalodunum, Londinium, and Verulam. In the narrative of Tacitus we see pretty distinctly the nature of the Roman occupation of Britain. These events happened in the year 61, only eighteen years after the invasion of Claudius. In the newly-founded colony of Camalodunum, the veterans and

* Xiphilini Epitomes Dionis Cassii, lib. lxii.

common soldiers had thrust the natives out of their dwellings, and exterminated them from their lands. Londinium, first noticed by Tacitus, is described as a place of importance, "not indeed dignified by the name of a colony, but yet of the highest distinction for abundance of regular merchants, and of traffic with other places." Verulam was a municipal city. In the indiscriminate slaughter which took place in all these three towns, we may assume that few of the natives were included, and that the chief inhabitants were Roman settlers. Upon the return of Suetonius from Mona, who rapidly marched through the country to Londinium, he at first resolved there to make a stand, but he subsequently abandoned the city. He dreaded the fate which had awaited the ninth legion at Camalodunum. The wretched inhabitants of the great emporium of the Thames implored him to defend them. He drafted some of them into his ranks, but all who remained behind—the women, the old men, those who clung to their pleasant abodes—fell, without exception, in one terrible destruction. In those three places, seventy thousand souls perished, "all Romans, or confederates of Rome." Tacitus says, that after the great battle in which Suetonius routed the revolters, famine, above all other calamities, destroyed the insurgent people, who had utterly neglected to cultivate the land, being wholly bent upon war, and hoping to appropriate the Roman stores to their use. The Romans, in eighteen years, had created their Londinium, and Verulam, and Camalodunum, upon spots where the natives had planted their stockades and their hill-forts, or carried on a small commerce by the vessels that sailed up the great estuaries of the Thames and the Colne. Whether Camalodunum be the present Colchester, or the neighbouring hill of Lexden, the valley beneath was undoubtedly in great part a marsh, and the Colne overspread its banks at every flow of the tide. The whole of the low ground between the Essex hills and Camberwell was considered by Sir Christopher Wren to have been anciently a great arm of the sea; and thus what the early Romans described as the mouth of the Thames would only have been a few miles below London, where the river was confined in artificial embankments. The great wall of the Thames, which the steam-boat traveller now gazes upon at low water, on the Essex shore, is an ancient work, either British or Roman. Upon these cities, surrounded by waters and woods, the infuriate forces of Boadicea made their devastating attacks. They came,—they, the Iceni and Trinobantes,—from the scattered villages of Norfolk, and Suffolk, and Essex, and Hertford, where they lived and worshipped after the fashion of their forefathers, to do battle with their oppressors, who had thrust their countrymen forth from their ancient seats, and had built more luxurious dwellings amidst their old cabins, and raised temples to strange gods whom their own sacred priesthood despised. They came for vengeance; but their triumph was of short duration.

The locality where Suetonius, with his ten thousand legionaries, in serried ranks, encountered the multitudinous army of Boadicea, has not been determined with any certainty. It is not likely, as was once believed, to have been so near the city as the spot now known as Battle Bridge. Suetonius, as we have seen, had abandoned Londinium to the fury of his enemy. After the devastation of Camalodunum, the British had spread westward, and left the eastern citadel open for the re-occupation of the Romans. To that neighbourhood, it is held that Suetonius marched, with the native hordes

pressing on his rear.* The description of Tacitus clearly shows the immense superiority of the Roman strategy. He prepared for encountering the enemy in open battle. He was posted in a place which stretched out into a hollow and narrow valley, with steep sides, and girt behind with a wood. He knew that the Britons were to be expected upon the plain in front. They came; everywhere exulting and bounding, in great separate bands, some of horse, some of foot. The legionary soldiers were drawn up in thick and condensed ranks. The Britons came, encumbered with multitudes of women, and weak followers, in crowded wains, with which they surrounded their camp. Boadicea was borne about on a chariot, wherein sat her two daughters. The Britons advanced upon the Roman army, who remained secure in their vantage-ground; but when they came within arrow-shot, the Romans rushed out with the force and keenness of a wedge. The rout was terrible. Eighty thousand, says the historian, were slain in that bloody field. Some escaped; but could never rally. Boadicea ended her life by poison. The remnant of the dispersed armies was pursued with unrelenting hostility; and every tribe that appeared inimical to Rome was devastated by fire and sword. The power of the confederated natives of Southern Britain was utterly broken. Yet there were still remaining the smouldering embers of revolt; and Tacitus has recorded the curious fact, that, however terrible was the power of the Roman arm, the subdued people would still indulge in the bitter luxury of contempt. When one of Nero's freedmen was sent to inspect the condition of Britain, and came with great pomp and power, he was an object of derision to the natives, who marvelled that their conquerors should be subjected to the interference of imperial slaves.

It would appear that Suetonius had followed up his triumph by too violent an exercise of the power of the sword. The Roman government had no desire to hold a devastated country which would yield nothing to the conquerors. Nero, therefore, sought to reconcile the revolted tribes. We may well conclude that the destruction of all material wealth during this last terrible contest had been enormous. Everything in Camalodunum, dignified as a colony, was razed or burnt. Verulam was seized by the spoiler. Londinium, there is reason for believing, was laid in ashes. Tacitus, speaking of the horror of Boadicea's assault, enumerates the implements of destruction as the sword, the gibbet, the cross, and the fire. Antiquaries have found the evidences of a burnt city many feet below the present surface. In excavating for a sewer in Lombard Street, in 1784, the following appearances are recorded: "The soil is almost uniformly divided into four strata; the uppermost, thirteen feet six inches thick, of factitious earth; the second, two feet thick, of brick, apparently the ruins of buildings; the third, three inches thick, of wood ashes, apparently the remains of a town built of wood, and destroyed by fire; the fourth, of Roman pavement, common and tesselated." † Many similar vestiges of fire, at the lowest level at which any traces of building have been discovered, have been found in this neighbourhood of the present city. These are not the remains of a Londinium, at a period rich with the monuments of Rome when her power was firmly established. They belong to an earlier age of Roman occupation. They tell of some great

* See an able article in 'Quarterly Review,' No. cxciii.
† Archæologia, quoted in "London."

catastrophe when Londinium was indeed prosperous, through resident merchants and foreign traffic; but was still a mean town, partly of wooden cabins that had been planted there amidst the ancient forests and fens; and partly of the better abodes of Roman officials, and of those who had come across the sea in trading ships, to settle upon the first convenient place that could be found as they ascended the great tidal river.

The events which succeeded the defeat of Boadicea, during sixteen years, present little that is remarkable. There was occasional revolt, especially amongst the mountain-tribes of the West; and one legate succeeded another without any material advance in the tranquil and secure possession of the country. At length the administration of the province was confided by Vespasian to Agricola—one of those illustrious men who, by their personal qualities, determine the destinies of nations, and whose influence extends far beyond the times in which they live.

Agricola had learnt the rudiments of war in Britain, under Suetonius Paulinus, at that terrible period when, as Tacitus relates, the Roman veterans were slaughtered, their colonies burnt down, their armies surprised and made prisoners,—when the struggle was for life rather than for victory. Eight years after the revolt of Boadicea, he commanded the twentieth legion in Britain (A.D. 69). He was subsequently invested with the government of the province of Aquitaine. Public opinion indicated his fitness for the more difficult task of the command in Britain. He entered upon his office in the year 78, having been previously raised to the dignity of consul.

The summer was nearly over when Agricola landed. The Ordovices, the indomitable tribe who defied the Roman power from the fastnesses of Denbighshire and Caernarvonshire, had recently slaughtered a band of horse stationed on their confines. Agricola immediately took the field. He gathered the scattered troops, who were retiring to their winter-quarters, and, suddenly marching upon the tribes, routed them in their mountain-holds. He continued his victorious course to the strait of Anglesey; and, disregarding the want of transports, landed with his swimming legions, and completely subdued the island of the Druids.

We shall more particularly notice, as we proceed, the labours of Agricola in correcting the abuses of the provincial governors, and in subduing the natives as much by the amenities of peace as by the severities of war. Meanwhile, we shall rapidly run over the events of his campaigns.

On the approach of the second summer he collected his army. The hostile people were dispersed about the country. He made himself acquainted with every locality. He knew the boundaries of the salt-marshes and the dense woods. He saw where the arms of the sea were to be crossed. He made sudden incursions wherever a tribe was collected in arms. He held out the hand of friendship to those who came to him with submission. He planted garrisons and fortresses throughout the land. He conciliated the chiefs by gathering them in the towns, and teaching them to build and adorn in accordance with the Roman tastes. He was in great degree the founder of the municipal institutions that rapidly sprang up in South Britain. We may collect from the narrative of Tacitus that the country was peacefully settled from the Thames to the Severn, and from the Humber to the Dee, after a few years of his administration.

In the third and fourth summers of his command, Agricola was engaged with no mean enemies in the northern parts of the country. He discovered new people, says the historian, and continued his conquests quite to the mouth of the Tay. He built forts on the very borders of the Grampian Hills, and there wintered at the end of the third summer. The historian implies that the vain desire to maintain the glory of the Roman name impelled the armies beyond the natural boundary that ought to have been assigned to the conquest of Britain. Between the estuaries of the Forth and the Clyde there was only a narrow neck of land, and this was secured by a line of garrisons. The enemy, says Tacitus, was driven, as it were, into another island. The Romans would probably have been content with the possession of the fertile lowlands, could they have been secure against the incursions of the hardy tribes of the highlands. The conqueror passed the boundary in his fifth campaign, and planted forces on the western coast. He had the subjugation of Ireland in prospect, and courted the friendship of one of its chieftains But Caledonia was yet unsubdued.

In the sixth summer Agricola explored the coast to the north of the Forth. Wherever he proceeded in his conquests he had a fleet; and the same camp, says his historian, often contained horse and foot, and sailors. Here they each related the perils of this great enterprise, and their escapes amongst barren mountains, and gloomy forests, and tempestuous seas. The hardy Caledonians did not wait for the attacks of their invaders. They assaulted the camp of the ninth legion, and were with difficulty repulsed by Agricola, who came upon their rear. The doubtful victory was to be followed by a fiercer conflict.

In his seventh summer the Roman army, to which their commander had added some of the southern Britons, marched onward to the Grampians. There were thirty thousand mountaineers in arms, under the command of Galgacus, who surpassed all in valour and descent. The oration which Tacitus assigns to the Caledonian leader is by Milton called, somewhat uncritically, "his rough oratory." It is a most elaborate composition, valueless as an historical fact, but exceedingly interesting in its illustrations of the nature of the war, and of the mode in which the historian systematically elevates the barbaric character, contrasting it with the oppressions of the government of the Cæsars, and the corruptions of luxurious Rome. Speaking through Galgacus, he calls the Romans "plunderers of the earth;" "to spoil, to harass, and to butcher they style government—

They make a solitude, and call it peace."

He shows the condition of the conquered people, exhausted by tribute; stripped of the grain which they had sown; compelled to make pathways through the woods, to drain the marshes, to dig mines for their oppressors. The people of his own remote districts, says Galgacus, have no fields to cultivate, or mines to dig, or ports to construct. The Romans were jealous of their liberty and security. The Romans led against them an army compounded of many nations—Germans, Gauls, and Britons, who had been much longer the enemies than the slaves of the invaders. The speech of Agricola to his soldiers is a feeble declamation by comparison. The great battle of the Grampians had the usual termination of the contests between a disciplined

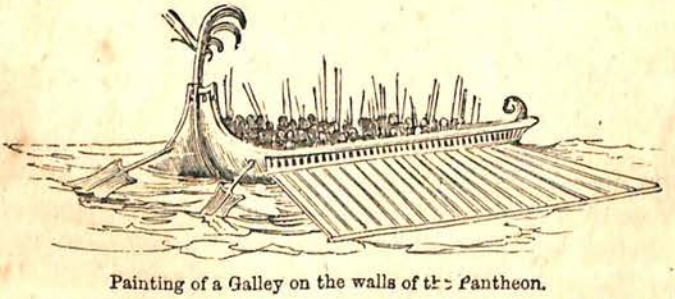
army and an armed multitude. Their osier targets and their pointless swords, their chariots and their darts, were weak instruments to meet the impetuous charges of the cohorts and the cavalry of Rome. Ten thousand Caledonians were slaughtered in the plain and on the mountain-sides. Night put an end to the carnage. The next day showed the conquerors an unusual scene.

Bronze Roman Shield.

There was profound silence all around; the smoke of burning dwellings rose in the hills, but not a living soul remained amidst the desolation. The victors attempted no pursuit, but marched slowly back to their winter garrisons, awing the natives as they passed along with their terrible array, such as Milton has so nobly described:—

> "Light-armed troops,
> In coats of mail and military pride;
> Nor wanted clouds of foot, nor on each horn
> Cuirassiers, all in steel, for standing fight."

In the address of Agricola to his army, Tacitus makes him say, "We possess the very extremity of Britain;—Britain is entirely discovered." The



Painting of a Galley on the walls of the Pantheon.

sagacity of Agricola had put an end to a controversy which had long agitated the speculative philosophers of Rome. Some held that Britain was part of an unexplored continent; some that it was an island. Chance in some degree

determined the question. A cohort of Germans who had been brought into the country, having slain the Roman soldiers who were training them, put to sea in three pinnaces; a few who survived the hardships to which they were exposed, were carried round Britain, and, falling into the hands of some continental natives, made the knowledge of its coast more familiar to the Romans. Dion Cassius relates that they sailed round the western coasts, as the wind and tide bore them, and landed inadvertently on the opposite side, where a Roman camp was situated, and that then Agricola sent others to explore the same course. After the close of the Caledonian war, Tacitus says that Agricola sent the Admiral of the fleet to encompass the island—"circumvehi Britanniam."

After the recall of Agricola by the jealous Domitian (A.D. 84) we know little of the condition of Britain for many years. Juvenal alludes to a chief, Arviragus, who was hurled headlong from his chariot; and the satirist indicates that the boast of such feats was common in Rome. In the year 120, the Emperor Hadrian is in Britain. His life, says Gibbon, "was almost a perpetual journey; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty. Careless of the difference of seasons and of climates, he marched on foot and bareheaded over the snows of Caledonia and the sultry plains of the Upper Egypt." Spartian, a Roman historian who flourished at the end of the third century, says, "He visited Britain, where he corrected many things; and first built a wall eighty miles in length, which divided the Romans from the Barbarians." In another passage the same historian states, that Severus "built a wall across the island." The line of forts which Agricola raised from the Clyde to the Forth, was strengthened, sixty years after, by a turf rampart known as the wall of Antoninus, which extended for

Statue, in British Museum, of the Emperor Hadrian.

thirty-six miles. But the wall of Hadrian, or of Severus, was a much more important work. This is the wall which, eleven hundred years ago, Bede described as "still famous to be seen . . . . eight feet in breadth and twelve in height, in a straight line from east to west." There are two parallel lines of stone wall and earthen intrenchments, running from a point on the river Tyne between Newcastle and Shields to Boulness on the Solway Frith, a distance of nearly eighty miles. The boundary of Agricola and Antoninus was raised against the warlike tribes of the Caledonian highlands. The wall of Hadrian, or of Severus, was the great artificial boundary of Roman England from sea to sea. It has been customary to ascribe the earthen rampart to Hadrian, and the stone wall to Severus; but it has been recently contended by an accomplished antiquary, Mr. Bruce, that they are essential parts of one fortification.

Bust of Antoninus Pius.

The name of Hadrian frequently occurs on inscriptions found in this locality. Severus may have repaired the work of Hadrian; and to this the few words of Spartian may have reference.* However this may be, it is pretty clear that, for a century, a constant strengthening of the defences of South Britain against the irruptions of the North was the policy of the Roman colonisers. Agricola left one rampart against the bands who he foresaw would come from the Grampians,

"To insult the plenty of the vales below."

Bust of Severus.

The wall of Hadrian was an inner line of defence, raised, probably, against the people of the wild districts that in later times were called the Borderland. But neither of them was a defence to be neglected. Antoninus strengthened the rampart of Agricola. Severus perfected the wall of Hadrian. The mighty rampart from the Solway to the Tyne was a frontier erected not only as a defence against devastating hostilities, but as a barrier to dangerous amities. The Brigantes, who dwelt in Lancashire and Yorkshire and Cumberland and Durham, amidst marshy valleys and barren mountains, had not

* See note in Dr. Smith's admirable edition of Gibbon, vol. i. p. 145.

borne the Roman yoke with the ease with which it had been imposed upon those parts of England, which, from their characteristics of soil and climate, were more fitted to receive the impress of a luxurious civilisation. The Mæatæ, a nation of the South of Scotland, were ready to join with them in revolt. They were driven back by the lieutenant of Antoninus. Again and again were the Roman stations assaulted. The history of the second century of the conquest of Britain is very meagre; but it sufficiently shows us that in the North there was perpetual violence and suspicion. At length the stern spirit of Severus was roused by the persevering resistance to the Imperial domination. The narrative of Dion Cassius of this period of our national history is graphic and interesting.

The Mæatæ, he says, dwell close to the wall which divides the island into two parts;—the Caledonians beyond them. By this wall, he means the rampart of Antoninus. They each lived, amidst mountains and marshes, by pasture and the chace, cultivating no land and inhabiting no towns, but dwelling in tents. Against these people Severus advanced. He underwent indescribable labours in cutting down woods, levelling hills, making marshes passable, and constructing bridges. He saw no army, and fought no battle; but he was perpetually harassed by ambuscades, and of his men fifty thousand perished. Suffering by infirmity and sickness, the iron will of the Emperor would not yield; and he was borne through the hostile district, in a covered litter, to the extremity of the island, where he concluded a treaty with the chieftains. There was an enemy near him more formidable than the Caledonians—his treacherous sons. There are few historical incidents more striking and characteristic than that which exhibits Severus, upon turning round as he headed his army, beholding the sword of one of these sons ready to strike him in the back; but, uttering not a word, ascending a tribunal, going through his ordinary duties, and then returning to his tent. The vengeance which next year Severus destined for the tribes who still continued to resist was cut short by his death, which took place at York in the year 211. Caracalla, his son, had other purposes of ambition than the chastisement of a barbarous tribe. He returned to Rome, leaving North Britain to its own fortunes by retiring from the hostile country.

For seventy years after the death of Severus, history is nearly silent on the affairs of Britain. In the Chronology of Events by Richard of Cirencester, there is only one entry from this period to the accession of Carausius in 286:—"During these times the Roman armies confined themselves within the wall, and all the island enjoyed a profound peace." This is a period in which, it being unmixed with other elements, we may take a general view of the condition of the country in the middle of the third century.

Coin found in London.

Roman Consul.

CHAPTER III.

Usurpation of Carausius.—Britain returns to the subordination of a Roman province.—Condition of the country at the end of the third century.—Its abundant produce.—Division into five provincial districts.—Amount of its population.—Roads.—The Army.—Fortified places.—Cities, and their Roman remains.—Mixed population of Britain.—Early settlement of foreigners.—Character of Roman administration.—Prevalence of Latin language and literature.—Traces of Roman customs and superstitions.

THE usurpation by Carausius of the sovereign power in Britain, in the year 286, offers one of the best historical proofs of the strength and prosperity of the country. He was by birth a Menapian, or native of Belgic Gaul; and, according to Mr. Kemble, "in the third century the inhabitants of the Menapian territory were certainly Teutonic." Appointed to the command of a powerful armament, to repress the ravages of Saxon pirates on the shores of Gaul and Britain, he abused his authority in a way which roused the indignation of the Emperors Maximian and Diocletian. Fleeing from their vengeance into Britain, he assumed the imperial purple, with the title of Augustus, and, trusting to the power of his island empire, defied the whole majesty of Rome. After six years of dominion, in which he raised the naval supremacy of Britain to a height which it only subsequently attained in the days of Alfred, he was betrayed and murdered by his minister Allectus; and in three more years, independent Britain was again subjected to the rule of the Cæsars, by the defeat of this second usurper, and quietly remained under the Imperial government of Constantius Chlorus, and of his successor Constantine.

A few years after these events occurred, our country was panegyrised by Eumenius, as "Britannia, fortunate and happier than all other lands;

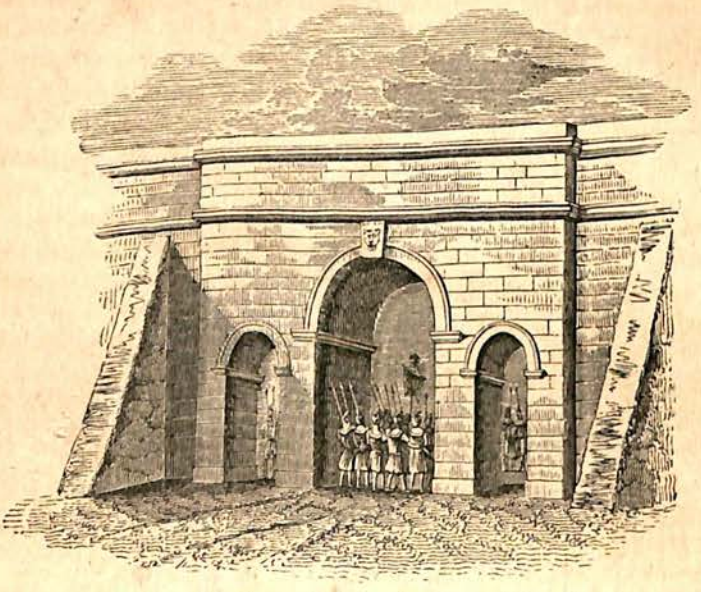
enriched with the choicest blessings of heaven and earth." To the Romans of the days of Constantine it was proclaimed, by another orator, to be matchless as "a land so stored with corn, so flourishing in pasture, so rich in variety of mines, so profitable in its tributes, on all its coasts so furnished with convenient harbours, and so immense in its circuit and extent." Gibbon says, "It is difficult to conceive that, in the beginning of the fourth century, England deserved all these commendations. A century and a half before, it hardly paid its own establishment." Let us not forget that two centuries before carry us back to the time of Agricola, when the country from the Thames to the Humber was in revolt; and that a century and a half before, Antoninus was striving to shut out the incursions of the Caledonians by his turf rampart. A century and a half of comparative tranquillity for Southern England, under the fertilising power of the Roman civilisation, would afford ample time to convert an expensive conquest into a valuable possession. Whether the individual happiness of the people had accompanied the productiveness of the soil, may be questioned. "Fortunate Britannia" was an eulogy for an emperor's ear.

This island, "so immense in its circuit and extent," was divided into five provinces. "Britannia Prima" was the name of all the district from the North Foreland to the Land's End, including the Isle of Wight, and comprehending all the inland parts south of the Thames and the Bristol Channel. North and South Wales constituted "Britannia Secunda." The third province, "Flavia Cæsariensis,"—so called from the cruel and jealous lord, Titus Flavius Domitianus, of the wise Agricola, who subdued and settled this important district—extended from the Humber to the Mersey. "Maxima Cæsariensis," the fourth province, included all the northern district to the wall of Hadrian and Severus. Beyond that wall, the fifth province, "Valentia," extended to the rampart of Antonine between the friths. To the extreme north was the unconquered Caledonia.

Of the amount of the population of Roman Britain it is difficult to arrive at any satisfactory estimate. Hume says, "The barbarous condition of Britain in former times is well known; and the thinness of its inhabitants may easily be conjectured, both from their barbarity, and from a circumstance mentioned by Herodian, that all Britain was marshy, even in Severus' time, after the Romans had been fully settled in it above a century." * Hume accepted, as many others have done, the common opinion of the "barbarity" of the inhabitants of Britain; but he has gone beyond this prejudice. He has misrepresented what Herodian does say. That historian, who flourished in the third century, describing the march of Severus against the Northern tribes, which we have narrated in the last chapter, says: "He more especially endeavoured to render the marshy places stable by means of causeways, that his soldiers, treading with safety, might easily pass them, and, having firm footing, fight to advantage. For *many parts of the British country, being constantly flooded by the tides of the ocean*, become marshy." This is very different from Herodian saying, "*all* Britain is marshy." It would be as absurd to say, upon the authority of Eumenius, that in the time of Constantius *all* Britain was rich with abundant harvests and innumerable flocks and herds. That this description of its wealth was applicable to the

* Essay xi.

southern and midland provinces of Britannia Prima and Flavia Cæsariensis, as well as to the rich valleys of the northern Maxima Cæsariensis, we can have little doubt, when we look at the roads with which they were intersected, and the numerous towns, forts, and harbours connected by these roads. This network of highways was not constructed for the sole purpose of marching the Roman legions from Dover to London, or from Bristol to Lincoln,—up

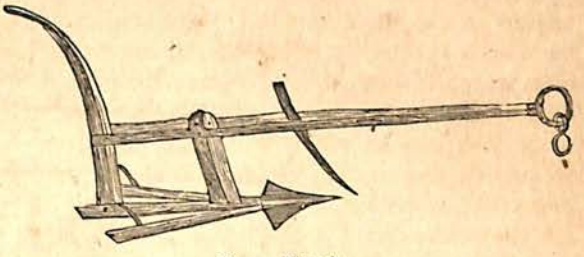


Restoration of the Roman Arch forming Newport Gate, Lincoln.

and down through the five provinces wherever there was a revolt to be put down or a tribute to be enforced.* The roads were the great connecting communications of a large population, who had not been without roads and towns in what was called their uncivilised state. They were not rude cartways between one village and another, but substantial works, with bold cuttings, and solid terraces carried by piles over marshy ground, and raised upon piers where elevation was required. Setting aside those numerous branch railways of modern England which the manufacturing element has created, they carried on the communications of the island, from the shores of the English Channel to those of the Irish Sea and the German Ocean, and connected all the inland country from the Thames to the Tyne, as completely, and more directly, than the railway system of our own day. According to the wants of the Roman colonisers and the Romanised English, they made this island, sixteen hundred years ago, one whole. These great works could not have been constructed or sustained except upon a self-supporting principle, derived from the intercourse of a considerable population. Tacitus, in speaking of those grievances of the native people which were remedied by Agricola, says that they were compelled to take long journeys for the purpose of carrying grain to places extremely distant, instead of supplying the troops in the winter-quarters which were nearest the homes of the cultivators. They

* The lines of Roman roads of which undoubted traces exist at the present time, are clearly shown by red lines in the map of "Britannia Romana," published in "Monumenta Historica Britannica."

were obliged to travel to remote places for the benefit of those who monopolised the corn. Here is distinct evidence, before the close of the first century, that the Roman legions and auxiliaries were supported by the produce of a country in which there were roads; and that they were not only supported by the tribute of grain, but that official rapacity wrung still more out of the capital of the cultivators. Had Agricola found a country without intercourse, he would necessarily have found no corn for tribute. The people, in their isolated fields, would have produced no more than they could have consumed. We are not told by the historian that the oppressive monopolists left the people to starve while the Roman soldiers were fed; but that the greedy officials seized upon the corn, and made the people buy it for their own consumption. Agricola augmented the tribute; but he made it less onerous by a just and equal distribution of the public burthens. If the produce was considerable, and the communications numerous, in the time of Agricola, we may well conceive that they had kept pace with the wants of an increasing civilised population in the time of Constantius. We cannot have a better evidence of the fertility of Britain, and the ease with which its produce was transmitted to its ports, than is furnished by one remarkable fact in the middle of the fourth century. The Emperor Julian, it is recorded, had built warehouses in his continental dominions for the reception of corn from Britain. But the amount of supply in one season is manifested by the fact, that six hundred large barks, built from the woods of the Ardennes, made several voyages under his direction to the coasts of Britain, and supplied the starving Rhine provinces, desolated by war, from the stores of the fertile island. The Romans had, without doubt, improved the agriculture of the country, and had bestowed upon the cultivators "the crooked plough," with "an eight-feet beam," of the Georgics of Virgil.* The abundance of agricultural produce for export assumes the existence of a large rural population. Nor is the fact less clear that there had been, from very early times, a mining population. The tin mines of Cornwall, and the lead mines of Derbyshire, were systematically worked, and their produce reserved with jealous care for Roman use. The pigs of lead in the British Museum, which bear the stamp of Domitian and Hadrian, show that Tacitus was not talking vaguely when he spoke of the abundance of metals in Britain which was the prize of the conquerors. There is visible proof at this day that the mining and smelting of iron was carried on by the Romans in Britain to a very large extent. Hutton, in his



Roman Plough.

Pig of Lead, with the Roman Stamp.

* Georg. I., 174.

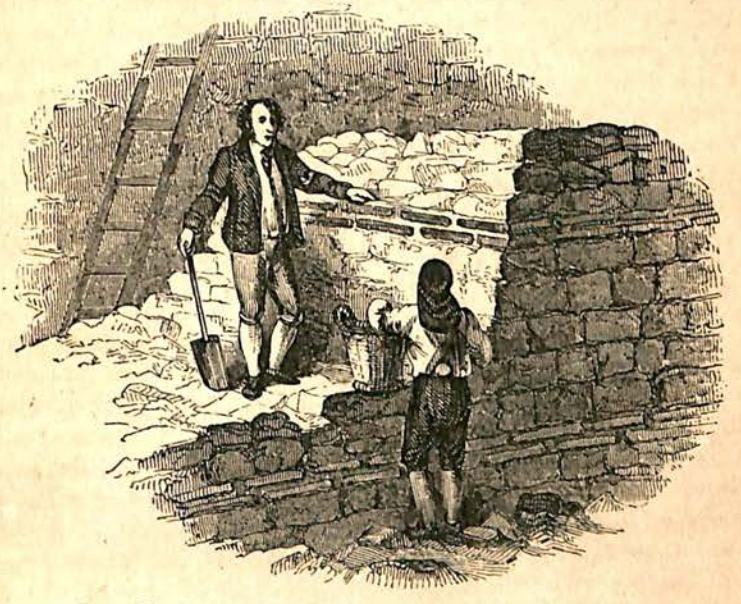
"History of Birmingham," speaks of an enormous cinder-heap which had existed there from the Roman time. Yarranton, who published a book at the end of the seventeenth century, entitled "Improvement by Sea and Land," describes "great heaps of cinders formerly made of ironstone, they being the offal (or waste) thrown out of the foot-blasts by the Romans; they then having no works to go by water, to drive bellows, but all by the foot-blast." At Worcester, he found the hearth of a Roman furnace; and he carried away many thousand tons of these cinders, which, having been imperfectly smelted, would still yield iron. Roman coins, in large numbers, have been constantly found buried amongst these scoriæ, upon which great oaks were growing. Mr. Thomas Wright, in 1852, went over the Roman iron district of the Forest of Dean and its neighbourhood; where he found deep pits, out of which ironstone had been dug, where Roman coins are frequently discovered; and he traced the cinders covering the earth in many parts of this district, which furnished the ore, and the wood for smelting. On the banks of the Wye, below Monmouth, the cinders "lay under our feet like pebbles on the sea-shore." *

That the first real civiliser of Britain was the military arm, is evident from every incidental relation of the Roman conquest. It was, for a long time, a very doubtful fight between disciplined legions and fearless multitudes. But the power established with so much difficulty could not be sustained without continual watchfulness. It was not only Agricola that erected fortified stations, and planted garrisons, but we may be quite sure that during several centuries they were multiplied all over the land, either as defences of the coast, or in the centre of Roman colonies, or in connection with municipal communities. The country is covered with the most enduring remains of these bulwarks of the Imperial dominion. The earthworks of the people that the Cæsars came to conquer still remain in many places. They interposed formidable barriers to the quiet progress of the Roman troops; and they were defended by large bodies of the whole population capable of bearing arms. But the legions and auxiliaries of the Roman garrisons were composed of an army, properly so called—men trained solely to the business of warfare, and wielding their strength under the most complete subjection to the will of an experienced commander, and with all the resources of civilisation that made war a science. The stations were, therefore, selected with all the skill that economises military power. They were on the coast, on the great navigable rivers, on the chief roads. Their distribution, when the rule of Rome was tranquilly established in Britain, was such as to require no very large force to garrison them. Although Aulus Plautius is held to have been at the head of four legions and their auxiliaries, computed at fifty thousand men,—although Severus lost fifty thousand followers in his terrible marches through the wild mountainous regions of the North,—we learn from that curious record of the later Roman levies, the "Notitia Imperii," that the permanent forces in Britain amounted to only about twenty-one thousand men. They were all Romans, or soldiers of tributary continental nations. The Britons, according to the invariable policy of Rome, were not entrusted with any share in the charge of the defences. They formed part of the ranks that were employed to hold other nations in subjection.

* Gentleman's Magazine, January, 1852.

Of these fortified places, some of the most important remains are found on the coast of South Britain, which was under the command, at an early period, of a military chief, designated as Comes Tractûs Maritimi, and, at a later period, Comes Littoris Saxonici per Britanniam. The Count of the Saxon Shore in Britain had nine fortresses to guard, from Portsmouth to Brancaster, at the mouth of the Wash. The interesting remains of Richborough, in Kent, and Burgh, in Suffolk, show the importance of those maritime stations.

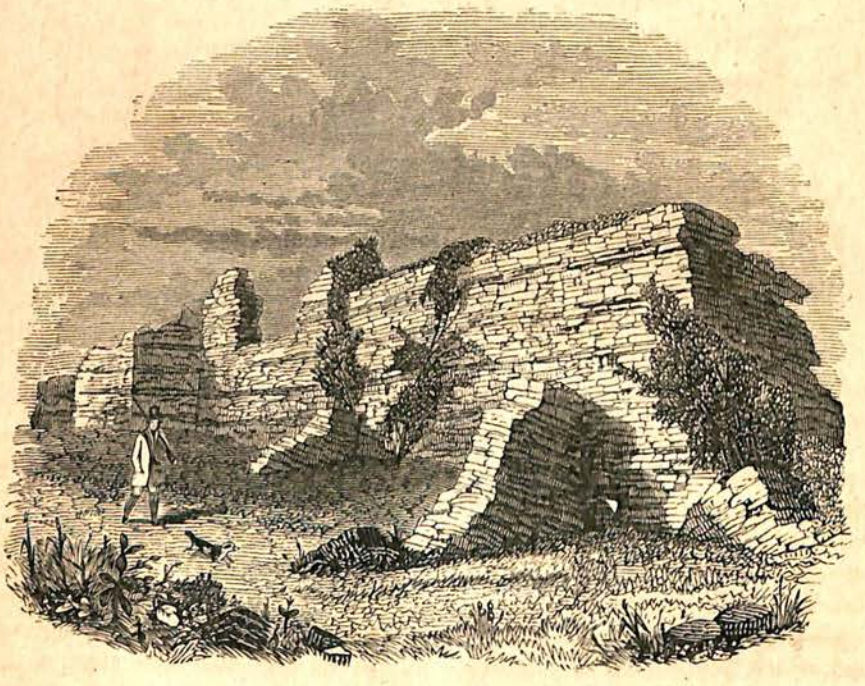
It is not within the object of this history to describe antiquities, but only to allude to them as undoubted memorials of a past time. The holiday-visitor of the Isle of Thanet, if he be not familiar with his country's annals, may have difficulty in comprehending why that fertile territory, now partially



Part of the Roman Wall of London, excavated behind the Minories.

bounded by the sea, is called an island. The railroad, which branches from Minster to Deal, goes beneath the walls of Richborough. The great sea passage from Boulogne to London, now a tiny stream, called the Wantsum, but in the fourteenth century termed an estuary by Richard of Cirencester, passed by these walls, and bore the Roman vessels to Reculver. The nearest station from Gaul was Dover; but the safest and nearest sea passage to London was by Richborough to the estuary of the Thames. Richborough was a colony, where Romans were settled as possessors of the land, and where the institutions of Rome were adopted without any change in the forms or principles of local government. There were nine of these colonies in Britain—London, Colchester, Richborough, Bath, Caerleon (in Monmouthshire), Chester, Gloucester, Lincoln, and Chesterford (near Cambridge). There were also two Municipal Cities, York and Verulam. The Roman walls of some of these places are more or less remarkable; but they are for the most part hidden by modern buildings, or buried amidst the accumulating rubbish of generations. From time to time, in London, when a sewer has to be formed, or a new foundation to be dug deep, we come upon fragments of

wall that are undoubtedly Roman. At Lincoln there are fragments of Roman walls and a Roman gate. At York, the Eboracum of the Romans, where Severus and Constantius died, the Roman work has been readily distinguished from the more modern city wall. The walls of Bath have been swept away, whatever was their age; but that they contained many Roman remains is distinctly attested. The walls of Chichester are very perfect. The walls of Colchester "may be advantageously compared with any other remains of the kind in this island, or even on the continent." * Exeter and Chester have walls erected upon Roman foundations. A fragment of Roman wall still stands to point out the site of the famous Verulam. These were all populous places—colonies or municipia. But the remaining walls of Richborough, a great military colony, stand in their



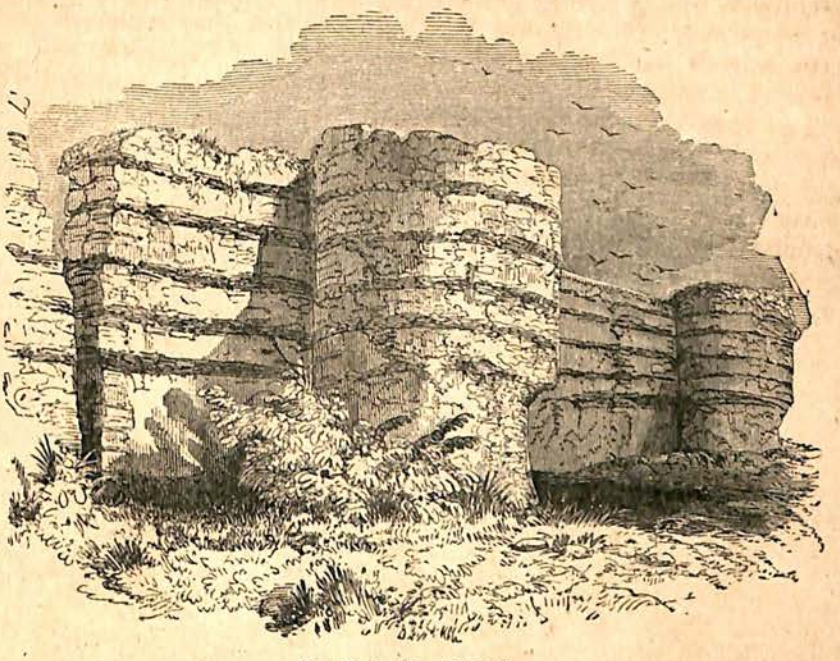
North Wall of Richborough.

solitary magnificence, as they have stood for sixteen or seventeen centuries, eleven or twelve feet thick at the base, from twenty to thirty feet in height, and their outer masonry as perfect in many places as when their alternate courses of stone and tile were first laid. The sea has receded from them; the broad channel they protected is a ditch; huge fragments have fallen in the course of generations; the area within them of five acres is a corn field; but they still tell something of the story of a great æra in the life of our nation, whose influence will be permanent when even these mighty ruins shall be swept away.

Burgh Castle (Gariannonum) is situated at the junction of the Waveney and the Yare. The east wall has four circular towers; the west side was once defended by the sea. Both Richborough and Burgh are examples of the

* Quarterly Review, No. cxciii.

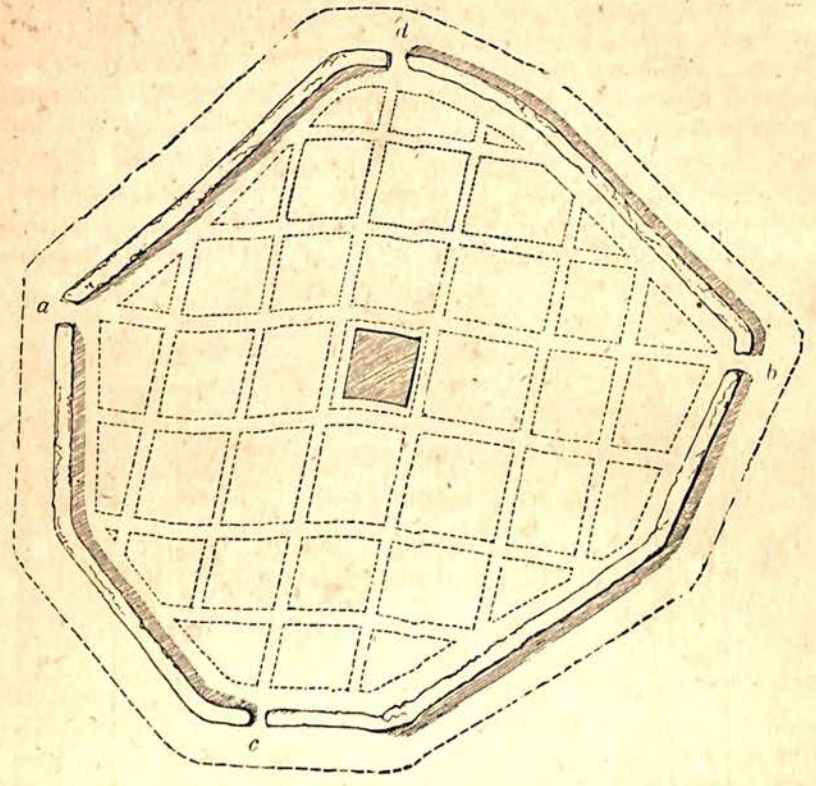
great changes of the coast-line, and show how these defences, which seem built for eternal dominion, would have become useless under physical revolutions, if the great revolutions of society had not riven them into fragments.



East Wall of Burgh Castle.

Richard of Cirencester, a monk of the fourteenth century, who collected valuable materials for the statistics of Roman Britain, says, "Among the Britons were formerly ninety-two cities, of which thirty-three were more celebrated and conspicuous." He then recites their Latin names. Amongst these cities it is doubtful whether he mentions one of the chief, now known as Silchester. He may notice it under some other name than that now assigned to it—Calleva Atrebatum. Of all the existing Roman remains, there are none which present more distinct evidence of the existence, some sixteen centuries ago, of a large civil community. It is situated in a district, at the present time of small population, and somewhat removed from all great communications; but it was once a central point, with roads converging to it from London, Spene, Winchester, Old Sarum, Bath, and Cirencester. It is now neglected, unknown, almost a solitary place amidst thick woods and bare heaths. The most striking characteristic of Silchester is the ruined wall, with old trees that have grown up in generations long past, and are now perishing with it. This remarkable spot is still pretty much as Camden described it: "The walls remain in good measure entire, only with some few gaps in those places where the gates have been; and out of these walls there grow oaks of such a vast bigness, incorporated, as it were, with the stones, and their roots and boughs are spread so far around that they raise admiration in all who behold them." But there is another remarkable characteristic of Silchester which Camden also observed, as it may be observed now: "The inhabitants of the place told me it had been a constant observation among

them, that, though the soil here is fat and fertile, yet in a sort of baulks which cross one another, the corn never grows so thick as in other parts of the field. Along them they believe the streets of the old city to have run." These streets occupy an area of a hundred acres; and their lines have been



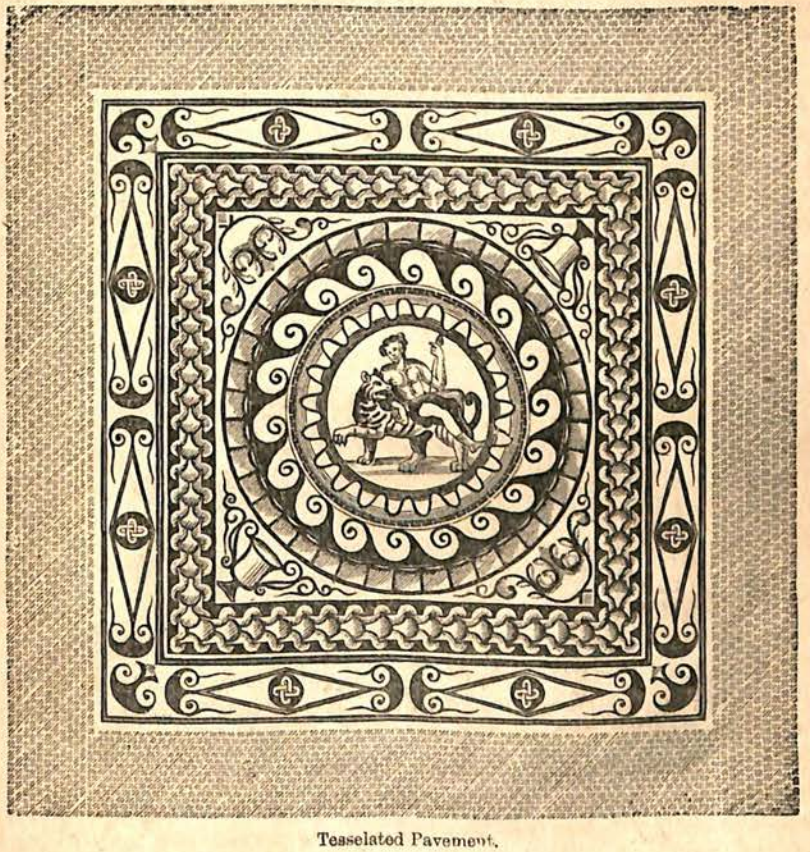
Silchester. Plan of City.

a, The Western Gate, near to which the Road now leads to the Church near *b*, the Eastern Gate; *c*, the South Gate; *d*, the North Gate.

mapped out. The people around still call the lonely place within these ruined walls, "the City." Let us consider what are the probable circumstances which have reduced this once flourishing city, with its remains of baths, of a forum, of a temple, of an amphitheatre, to its present desolate condition. Such considerations belong to history.

Nearly all the great Roman towns have been fixed in localities which possess some eminent natural advantages. Many of these sites were perhaps chosen by the natives before the Romans, who improved the advantages by their higher civilisation. It was not the policy of Rome to extirpate the natives as an inferior race; but to use them as brave and intelligent instruments for advancing its own wealth and power. Agricola exhorted the British people to build houses, temples, and market-places. When they had completed their works of utility they proceeded to erect other buildings for ornament, such as galleries, baths, and banqueting houses. The testimony of Tacitus is clear, that the conquerors excited and assisted the conquered to the emulation of the Roman conveniences and luxuries. Agricola had the sons of their chiefs taught the liberal sciences and the Roman language. There

can be no doubt that the imperial power was in many cases delegated to the native rulers. Cogidubnus was one of these, who was permitted to retain possession of his kingdom; and an inscription has been discovered at Chichester, which imports that he was king and legate of the emperor.* In the same way it may be presumed that Silchester, the city of the Atrebatii, was under the rule of a native prince of the tribe. The form of its walls is not Roman; and it was much too large for a military station. It was a great agricultural capital, approached by roads in all directions. But it had no important natural advantages,—no river for commerce, and no hills for defence. It was in a rich plain; and was, most probably, a store for agricultural produce. Governed, no doubt it was, by its own municipality, under more or less stringent centralisation. When the imperial supervision,



Teselated Pavement.

which was the key-stone of the arch of British local government, was withdrawn, Silchester was more exposed to the assaults of hostile forces than the towns which the Romans had planted round hill forts and defences of coasts and estuaries. The history of its actual ruin is buried in the obscurity of the centuries that we designate as those of the Saxon invasion. It was probably sacked and burned; but it would not have remained a ruin for hundreds of years had not the conditions of its prosperity been of a transitory nature.

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. xxxii. See Quarterly Review, No. cxciii.

In striking contrast to the desolation of Silchester stand the exuberant riches and mighty population of London. They had each the same institutions which at first sight might appear to bind their citizens to a common interest and a common defence against external assaults. But Silchester had no Thames as London had, through which, whether her government were Roman, or Saxon, or Norman, she could draw to herself some portion of the wealth of continental civilisation. We have no evidence that London ever exhibited such remains of Roman magnificence as Giraldus Cambrensis describes of Carleon in the twelfth century—stately palaces, towers, temples, theatres, aqueducts. Its buildings were probably of brick, which no Augustus could convert into marble. But wherever we step, within certain limits of the present city, evidences of the Roman presence are continually discovered. Leadenhall Street yields its tesselated pavements, at nine feet and a half below the surface. Here Bacchus rests on his tiger bearing his thyrsus and his drinking-cup. Small silver and bronze images are found even in the bed of the Thames, supposed to have been the penates of some Roman or Romanised family. Londinium, as far as we can judge from its remains, appears to have extended from Blackfriars to the Tower, on the bank of the river; and, in an irregular form, to a line formed northward by Bishopsgate. Much controversy has arisen about the limits of Roman London, which concern us not in this narrative. Within these limits, and beyond them, constant evidences of the old arts and the old religion present themselves.

Roman Antiquities found on the site of Paul's Cross.

Where the great preachers of a reformed Christianity thundered forth their denunciations against a Papal Rome, there, at Paul's Cross, were many evidences of a Heathen Rome disinterred. Cemeteries have been discovered beyond the walls, where the cinerary urns of the dead were evidences of other burial rites. These tell of a large and busy population here once abiding; whose ashes have "quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests."* But London has its relics which tell something more

* Sir T. Brown on Urn Burial

of the inner life of that population. In excavating the site of the Royal Exchange in 1840, the workmen came to a mass of Roman brickwork about six feet square, which it was necessary to remove. The earth beneath was unsound; and they dug lower. A deep pit was discovered. It contained, not urns and vases, but every species of rubbish that could have been accumulated by the diligent dustmen of a Roman city. Here was a great heap of oyster-shells, goat's horns and sheep's horns, cinders, broken pottery and glass, worn-out soles of shoes and sandals. There was the light sole for the woman's sandal, less than eight inches long by two broad; and the heavy sole, of several pegged leathers, a foot long by three inches and a half broad. There were the waxen tablets, with their bone and wood styles, upon which dealers recorded their bargains, and enamoured youths their appointments. There were every variety of tool—broken for the most part—gouges, augurs, saws. Knives were there with the makers' names upon them, as some of the pottery also bore the makers' names. Bobbins were there for weaving, similar in form to the slivers used by our own hand-loom weavers, if there be any such remaining. There were also found a few coins, chiefly those of Vespasian and Domitian. We cannot have better evidence of the existence in London of a busy population, of various occupations, and, no doubt, of various ranks—the senator and the slave, the soldier and the shopkeeper.

But there is nothing in the relics of the Roman dominion, as they are thus manifested when the soil is disturbed of once populous cities, that can tell us of what different nations the population was composed. Everything has a Romanised aspect. We cannot learn what was the proportion of the British population to the Roman, and what was the Gaulish or Teutonic element as compared to the British. The popular opinion of this difficult question seems to have resolved itself into this:—that our island had first a native people, whom we call Britons; then its Roman conquerors; and, these having seceded after four or five centuries, then the Saxons. We have been accustomed to look upon our early history as a great drama with its division into acts, so separate from what had gone before that the continuity of the events could nowhere be recognised. As "the child is father of the man," so is one period of our history the father of the next period; and the later period infallibly derives much of its character, not only from its immediate predecessor, but from all that has gone before. The right understanding of the History of England much depends upon not forgetting this continuity.

The population of England at the end of the third century, we are inclined to believe, in accordance with opinions that appear founded upon careful research, was a very mixed one. Tacitus, in the oration of Galgacus, speaks of Gauls and Germans in the army of Agricola. Cæsar distinctly notices the presence of continental tribes in Britain, both in the interior and on the coast. When Marcus Antoninus had put down the great German confederacy against the Roman power, he commanded two of the nations "to deliver up the flower of their youth, who were immediately sent into Britain, a remote island, where they might be secure as hostages, and useful as soldiers." Gibbon derives this fact from the authority of Dion Cassius. Probus, according to Zosimus, sent Burgundians and Vandals into Britain, "who, when settled in that island, were serviceable to the emperor, as often as any one thenceforward revolted." There are later traces of Germans serving with the Roman legions. Mr. Kemble

considers it "not at all improbable that Carausius, when, in the year 287, he raised the standard of revolt in Britain, calculated upon the assistance of the Germans in this country, as well as that of their allies and brethren on the continent." * Finally, three of the soundest authorities upon the subject of our early history, Dr. Lappenberg, Sir Francis Palgrave, and Mr. Kemble, agree in the belief, that the Saxon shore of Britain, of which, as we have mentioned, there was an especial officer in command, derived its name from a settlement of Saxons. "The prevailing opinion, that the 'Litus Saxonicum' borrowed its name from the enemy to whose attacks it was exposed, appears as contrary to the principles of sound philology, as it is unhistorical." † These facts, derived from so many independent sources, go far to refute the common opinion set forth in all our histories, but resting only upon loose traditions, that the settlements of the Germanic races in England were subsequent to the termination of the Roman rule. The "Notitia Imperii," in which the Saxon shore is mentioned, was drawn up, according to Dr. William Smith, about the year 400.‡ So far from the Roman government in Britain discouraging settlements of foreigners, we see, from the policy of the emperor Probus, that they were encouraged to abide amidst the native races, as a method, amongst others, of neutralising their hostility. We shall have to return to this interesting subject. We slightly mention it here to show that the character of the population of Britain must have been greatly modified by the admixture of races. The original British or Celtic element had in all likelihood greatly diminished by the end of the third century, and remained without admixture only in districts which had infrequent intercourse with the more cultivated and populous parts of the island, and which the Romans purposely separated by military barriers, such as the Severn exhibits, from their lowland towns. But if the population of Britain which the Romans governed was, as we may well conclude, very various in its character, according to the varieties of its original stock, and therefore more or less adapted for a full development of the Roman civilisation, the imperial power which controlled these discordant elements was unvarying in its principles, and universal in its application. Let us briefly examine the leading features of the Roman administration of a great province.

When Agricola exhorted the British people, wild and dispersed over the country, to congregate in towns, he was labouring to carry out the universal principle of Roman government. He was not unsuccessful in his endeavours to form them into large communities; for, forty years after, Ptolemy the geographer gives the names of fifty-six towns in Britain. That many of these existed before the Roman occupation, we may well believe. Agricola assisted the people in carrying forward the principle of large associations, and invited them to a more convenient and luxurious form of town life than they had previously known. That principle was inapplicable to a scattered population, such as we see in the rural districts of England at the present day, where a few cottages are clustered round the neighbourhood of the parish church, and the solitary homestead of the farmer here and there lies sheltered on the side of the hills. The owners of the land dwelt in the towns; their serfs went forth from the towns to cultivate the fields, or tended the herds in some

* Saxons in England, vol. i. p. 12.
† Lappenberg, History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings, vol. i. p. 46.
‡ Gibbon, edited by Dr. Smith, vol iv. p. 388.

mud cabin not far removed from their masters. "The history of the conquest of the world by Rome," says M. Guizot, "is the history of the conquest and foundation of a great number of cities." The government of Rome was, therefore, essentially municipal. It would thus appear to have been far removed from unmitigated despotism, and to have conferred great powers and privileges upon the municipality. We must not judge of this by any modern analogies. The inhabitants of a city were permitted various conditions of self-government, according to the nature of its relations with the centralising power; and these distinctions were preserved in Britain, where, of the ninety-two cities mentioned by Richard of Cirencester, some were ranked as Municipal, some as Colonial, some as under the Latian law, and some as Stipendiary. Into these distinctions it is not necessary for us to enter. However named, they were all governed by municipal regulations and municipal officers, either freely chosen, or forced upon the community. There were privileged residents in each of these cities, who, in historical documents, are termed senators. How they were constituted, and what were their duties, does not appear very clear. They formed, no doubt, a political aristocracy. The active and really important members of the municipal body were the "curiales," (sometimes called "decuriones") men of landed property residing within the walls of the city, and discharging every municipal function, from that of the tax-collector to the chief magistrate. But let us not imagine that these official persons had a position in the least corresponding in freedom to that of the common councilmen, or elected vestrymen, of our modern English society. They were not representatives of the great body of the citizens; there was no election to the office; to belong to the "curia" was not claimed by them as a right, but forced upon them as a task. It was, indeed, a task involving many restrictions and some risks, even in the best times. They were not allowed to absent themselves without permission from their town; a portion of their property, at their decease, went to the common stock of the "curia;" they were not the assessors of the taxes, but were bound to collect what was imposed, and were responsible for any deficiency. They were exempted from torture and ignominious punishments, to which those below them, the "plebs," were subject; but they had the constant torture of being harassed by the Roman officials, civil and military, whose chief labour was to extract as much as possible out of the municipality, with slight regard to the ease of the people. Agricola, as we have seen, struggled against the rapacity of the imperial functionaries. The great "procurator," or revenue officer, of the province, had his subordinates in every city to look after the "curiales," and to take especial care that no lenity interfered with the rigid collection of the poll-tax, the funeral-tax, the legacy-tax, the auction-tax, the tax on the sale of slaves, the tithe of mining produce, and the tribute of corn, hay, and cattle. Sometimes the levy was just; often it was frightfully oppressive. We may be pretty well assured, if the procurator and his officers pressed the curiales, that the curiales, who had to make up a deficient impost, equally pressed the plebeians. These, the holders of small patches of land, the artisans and the traders, had no responsibility in the management of affairs, and no power of control over those who were responsible. They pursued their occupations,—the rich, with the aid of their domestic slaves; the poorer, with their own unassisted labour. At the end of the third century, it may be reasonably

assumed that the class of free artisans was established in the British cities. Whether at this period they were formed into those guilds, which in subsequent times had such an important influence in raising the burgher class, is matter of conjecture; but such corporations of handicraftsmen seem a natural offshoot of the general municipal government of Rome. Perhaps the most numerous class of the Romanised cities of Britain were the slaves,—varying in their condition of comfort according to the circumstances of their masters,—some attached to the land, and depending for sustenance upon the owner; some discharging the domestic offices, pilfering and pampered; and some approaching almost to the condition of free labourers. But, one and all, they had no political powers. The curiales and the plebeians had, at one period, and in some places, voices in the election of magistrates. All this municipal organisation included the mixed population whom we have mentioned—Romans, Britons, Gauls, Germans. But over all rode the great centralising power of Rome itself; suspicious, exclusive, rapacious, and utterly selfish. Revolts were constantly taking place under the system of extortion which Agricola tried to suppress; and then the Roman slave-dealer had his full share of the plunder of the revolters. Fiscal exactions and private luxury ate deeply into the resources of the land-owners who had the barren dignity of belonging to the curia; and then the Roman mortgagees drove that class to desperation, as the philosopher Seneca, who could write of the duty of conferring benefits but was practically a griping usurer, had very early tormented them. There was nothing confiding or generous in the Roman rule. Modern nations have tried the same system of colonial oppression, and have gathered the same fruits of injustice. Britain was never a secure possession. Her resources were never fully developed; because her nationality was outraged, and her people were disarmed and fettered. Such was the municipal economy of Roman Britain for four centuries. The visible head of this mighty domination was the Consul—sometimes called Legatus, sometimes Præfectus or Proprætor. In him was the supreme military and civil power vested, up to the time of Constantine. But over him was the jealous control of the Cæsar of the hour, and round him was the imperial spy. He might be recalled to a triumph or a grave. He might remain to seduce the legions, and become himself a Cæsar.

M. Guizot, endeavouring to express a general truth in a few words, says that amongst the elements of modern civilisation, the spirit of legality, of regular association, was derived from the Roman world, from the municipalities and the Roman laws. From the Germans came the spirit of personal liberty.* When we consider how essentially these two great elements have been blended in the political institutions of modern Britain, and in the individual character of the British people, we may feel some reverence, however qualified, for the municipal principle of Rome thus impressed upon us, so as to have become united with the other principle of personal freedom which we derived from the Saxons, and with which the social state of Rome

* Histoire de la Civilisation en France, Septième Leçon.

had no identity. It is this admixture of various elements of society that so constantly arrests our attention in the early history of our country. We are encountered, at every step of historical inquiry, by considerations that belong to the varieties of race, of language, of institutions, of manners,—all sufficiently distinct, but rather to be regarded in their union than their separation.

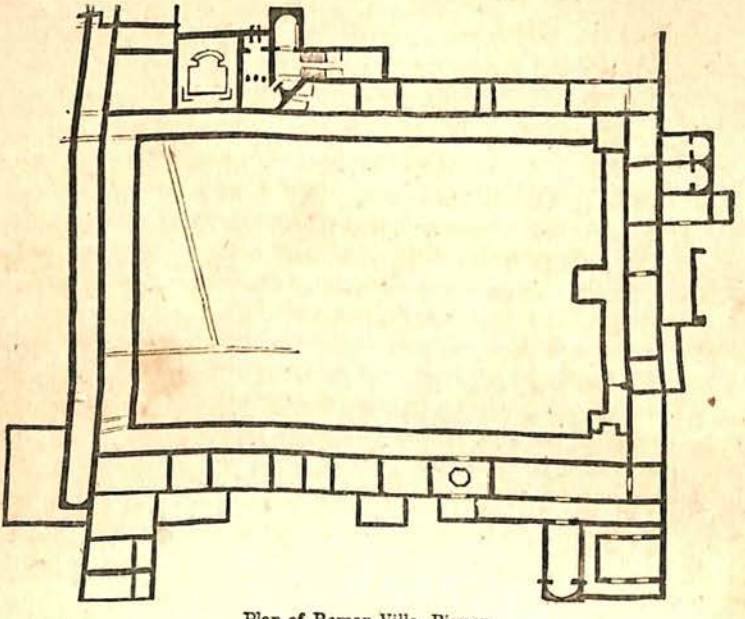
Much that has been said of the low amount of the permanent civilisation of England through the Roman rule, may perhaps be accounted for without believing in what is called the "barbarity" of the native people. It was in the earlier years of the Roman occupation that Tacitus tells us of the aptitude of the more educated classes to acquire the Roman eloquence, and when Martial intimates that the Roman poets were read in Britain. Macaulay holds, that "It is not probable the islanders were at any time generally familiar with the tongue of their Italian rulers." It is easy to account for the difficulty of altering the language of that portion of the people which was somewhat remote from the great masses of society, when we know that Welsh is a common language at this day, and that Cornwall had a spoken language of its own in the last century. But that the more educated inhabitants of the cities were unacquainted with the language in which all their municipal regulations were conducted, is to presume an incapacity which is not justified by historical evidence. A great number of Latin words are found in the Welsh language, although in Wales there are fewer Roman remains than in any part of Britain. The Latin tongue was no doubt driven out by the Anglo-Saxon; but if we assume a much earlier settlement of a Saxon population in England than is commonly imagined, we may account for "the incorporation of much Latin with Anglo-Saxon," without holding that the mixed languages came from the region of the Saxon race, "where the Roman power and preponderance had been quite sufficiently felt to produce this effect." * In no country under the dominion of Rome was the admixture of races so extensive as in Britain; and that admixture, be it remembered, chiefly prevailed in the most populous places. The result, in the large communities, was a blended progeny and a blended language. A writer who knows how to be popular without being superficial, tells us how the Roman features may be still traced in the Isle of Wight, where the Roman soldier had his first encampments.† In the same way the great seats of Saxon settlement may be also identified by a distinctive character of countenance. As we find an old British law in the present day, which Roman, and Saxon, and Norman codes have not obliterated—the law of Gavelkind—so in particular districts dialects and manners continued unchanged. That the Britons were not as fully Romanised as were the people of Spain and Gaul, was a natural consequence of their insular position, and of that indomitable character under oppression which Tacitus so honestly records.

Of the state of the arts in Britain we have no very distinct means of judging; nor can we separate, in the erection and ornament of any building, the skill of the Roman workman from that of the British. It is recorded by Eumenius, that when the Emperor Constantius rebuilt the city of Autun, in Gaul, he brought the artificers chiefly from Britain. Nothing, however,

* Forby, Vocabulary of East Anglia, vol. i. p. 28.

† Landmarks of the History of England, by the Rev. J. White, p. 3.

has been discovered of architectural remains which show a very high style of art; and we must bear in mind that the climate was unfavourable for the preservation of richly-ornamented friezes and capitals, if any such existed. Of decorative painting we are not without specimens. Forbearing to enter into antiquarian details, we may mention the remarkable Roman villa of Bignor, in Sussex; which, probably, was the country-house of some important officer of the neighbouring city of Chichester, the Regnum of the Romans. On the



Plan of Roman Villa, Bignor.

slope of a gentle hill, and not far removed from the old Roman road known as Stone Street, may be seen the very perfect remains of a house and its offices, of considerable extent. Here are mosaic pavements and painted walls of bold and elegant designs, whose colours are still fresh, and whose chemical composition, according to Sir Humphry Davy, is similar to that employed in the baths of Titus at Rome, and the buildings at Pompeii. An inscription found at Chichester * records that the guild or college of workmen built a temple to Neptune and Minerva. Were they the builders of the villa at Bignor? Were there, in this now solitary place, other buildings in which lived the slaves and dependents of the personage who occupied it? Had he every household resource within his own gates; or did his tailor and his grocer drive their carts along the highway from the city, which was then a port, and bring him the newest fashion of the toga, or the last imported luxury, from the seat of empire? We only know that in this remote place a rich man dwelt, with numerous chambers and spacious courts,—his atrium and his basilica, his baths, his colonnades, and his gardens.

The customs of a nation, and whatever relates to its common life, furnish as enduring traces of what has gone before, as its laws and its language. There cannot be a more striking example of the blending of Roman and Teutonic modes of thought, than is furnished by the names of our months

* See p. 41.

and of our weeks. January presents itself under the influence of the "Two-faced Janus;" March is the month of Mars; July keeps to the memory of the mighty Julius; and August claims an annual reverence for the crafty Augustus. It was in vain that the Saxons would have superseded these popular titles by their "wolf-monat," for January; and their "lenet-monat" (lengthening month) for March. In vain they would have made Cæsar and Octavius yield to their "hay-month" and their "barn-month." And yet they have put their perpetual stamp upon our week days. The Saxon Woden set his mark upon Wednesday, and banished the "dies Mercurii;" Thor, the Saxon thunderer, was too mighty for the Roman Jupiter, who yielded up his "dies Jovis;" and that endearing wife of Woden, the Saxon Frea, dispossessed the Roman goddess of love of her "dies Veneris." But the Saxons have not obliterated more trifling things. Many traditionary customs and superstitions which have come down to us from the Roman period still bear testimony to the Roman influence. Our parochial perambulations are the ancient Terminalia; our May-day is the festival of Flora. Our marriage ceremonies are all Roman—the ring, the veil, the wedding gifts, the groomsmen and bridesmaids, the bride-cake. Our funeral images and customs are Roman—the cypress and the yew, the flowers strewn upon graves, the black for mourning. The lucky days of a century ago were the "dies albi" of the Romans, and the unlucky, the "dies atri." If we ask why we say "God bless you" to the sneezer, we only ask a question which Pliny asked, and perform a ceremony which even the stern Tiberius thought it necessary to perform. If we laugh at the credulous fancy of the simple maiden, who, when her ears tingle, says that a distant one is talking of her, we should recollect that the Romans believed in some influence of a mesmeric nature which produced the same effect. We have faith in odd numbers, as Virgil records the faith "Numero Deus impare gaudet." "A screech-owl at midnight," says Addison, "has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers." The terror was traditionary. "The bird of night" was ever an evil bird; and no Roman superstition entered more completely into the popular belief, and was more referred to by the historians and the poets. Indications such as these of the influences of the obscure past may be as trustworthy records as half obliterated inscriptions. They enable us to piece out a passage or two in the history of a people.

Two-headed Janus.

Remains of a Church in Dover Castle

CHAPTER IV.

Introduction of Christianity—Persecution of Diocletian—St. Alban—Constantine—Church in Britain—Extortions and cruelties of the notary Paulus—Irruption of the Scots and Picts—Maximus—British colony of Armorica—Assertion of independence by Britons and Armoricans.

An ancient chronicler of Dover Castle says,—"In the year of Grace, 180, reigned in Britain, Lucius. He became a Christian under Pope Eleutherius, and served God, and advanced Holy Church as much as he could. Amongst other benefits, he made a church in the said Castle, where the people of the town might receive the sacraments." * The remains of some ancient church, constructed of Roman materials, if not of Roman work, are still to be seen within the area of Dover Castle. The ruins, and the traditions which belong to them, are no sufficient evidence that here is the church of Lucius; nor is the record of the Dover chronicler and other annalists of much more value as to the period of the introduction of Christianity into Britain, or of the instruments of the Divine will by whom it was introduced. Tertullian, at the beginning of the third century, says that Britain had received the faith of Christ. The extent of its reception at that early date is very doubtful.

But if the statements of the ancient British writers, as to the adoption of

* Quoted in Dugdale--Account of the Nunnery of Saint Martin

Christianity by Lucius, or Lever Maur (the great light), are deficient in that precision which constitutes historical authenticity, there is ample evidence that a Christian church of some importance was established in Britain at the beginning of the fourth century. At the first Council of Arles, in 314, three British bishops are recorded to have been present, and to have asserted opinions in some degree differing from those of the Romish Church. Constantine was then Emperor. He, the son of Constantius, by an English mother, Helena,—born in Britain—raised to the imperial power by the affection of the army in Britain, in 306,—would necessarily afford every encouragement to the propagation of the faith which he had himself adopted. But, a few years before, the spread of Christianity had been fearfully interrupted by the persecutions under Diocletian and Maximian. To this period of fiery trial belongs the history of the British proto-martyr, Alban. Milton treats this passage of our annals with characteristic brevity:—"Diocletian, having hitherto successfully used his valour against the enemies of his empire, uses now his rage in a bloody persecution against his obedient and harmless Christian subjects: from the feeling whereof, neither was this island, though most remote, far enough removed. Among them here who suffered gloriously, Aron, and Julius of Caerleon-upon-Usk, but chiefly Alban of Verulam, were most renowned: the story of whose martyrdom, soiled and worse martyred with the fabling zeal of some idle fancies, more fond of miracles than apprehensive of truth, deserves not longer digression." The legend of Saint Alban, as told by Bede, has much of what in these days we may call "fabling zeal"; but, nevertheless, in his beautiful and simple narrative, we may recognise much that is "apprehensive of truth." The celebrity of Alban was recognised by an Italian poet of the sixth century, before Bede wrote in the eighth. Deduct from Bede's narrative the miraculous drying-up of the waters of the river to allow the martyr's passage, and the sudden gushing out of a spring to afford him drink, and we have a consistent relation, which presents what we may well believe to be an accurate historical picture of the individual persecution of a British Christian before a Roman tribunal, bent upon enforcing the heathen worship. Alban was a Pagan, says Bede, at the time when the persecution began; and receiving into his house a certain priest, who was flying from the oppressors, was converted by his piety, and became a Christian in all sincerity of heart. When the hiding-place of the fugitive was discovered, Alban disguised himself in the clerical gown which his guest had worn, and was led bound before the Roman magistrate. The sacrifice to friendship was perfected by the stripes and death of the "self-offered victim," who boldly declared himself: "My name is Alban, and I worship the only true and living God, who created all things." He was delivered to the lictor; but the man was so moved by the fortitude of the Christian, and by the miraculous circumstances attending his progress, that he refused to perform his bloody office. Another executioner was found, and the two perished together. Bede has described the locality of this scene with an exactness which was evidently derived from personal observation of the hill of St. Alban's, whose gentle slopes, clothed with flowers, delighted the imagination of the venerable monk of Jarrow.

The civil government of Britain was remodelled by Constantine. The province was placed under the jurisdiction of the prefect of the Gauls; and

his deputy, who bore the title of Vicar of Britain, resided at York. Under him were presidents of each of the four great divisions of the island. The military administration of the country was separated from the civil, and was confided to three officers, whose titles of Count and Duke have descended to modern ages. Constantine died in the year 337: but the internal tranquillity of the island was little disturbed for half a century after the persecution of the Christians had ceased. We have no record during this period of the comparative prevalence of the old British superstitions; of the rites of Pagan Rome; or of the Christian worship. But, even at this early period, the Church in Britain partook of the doctrinal contentions that in all periods have interfered with the general reception of the great fundamental principles of the religion of Christ. Whilst the Romanised Britons were giving a cold and qualified adherence to the divinations and sacrifices of temples raised to Diana and Apollo, and some converts to a nobler creed indignantly cast away their household deities;* and whilst the ancient votaries of Druidism were gradually adapting themselves to a faith, to which, in the doctrine of a future life and of a supreme judge, their own had some faint relation, the differences of the Romish and Eastern Churches about the celebration of Easter, and the violent opposition of the Arian and the more orthodox creed, penetrated into these regions so far removed from the disputes of the great Councils. At a later period, the contests about points of doctrine became more strenuous; and we may in part attribute to these dissensions the remarkable circumstance that, during two centuries, the Christian creed was entirely swept away by Saxon heathendom; and that not only the names of Arius and Athanasius, which were familiar in the fourth century, were forgotten, but that the great fact recorded by Chrysostom at the end of that century,—that the Britannic isles had felt the power of the Word, and that

Roman Lictor.—See p. 51.

* The small figures found in the bed of the Thames, at London, which are represented in the following page, are supposed to have been thrown there by some of the more zealous converts to Christianity, who thus rejected their *Penates*.

"churches and altars had been erected,"—had passed away, like "an insubstantial pageant faded." But amidst these polemical conflicts, which were probably more agitating the ecclesiastics than disturbing the people, the healing and humanising doctrines of Christianity were operating to produce the tranquillity and prosperity which seemed to have belonged to Britain in the days of Constantine and his immediate successors. The Church had, to some extent, become a power; and in producing a comparative equality amongst the populations of the island—Roman, British and Teutonic,—it had mitigated many of the oppressions of a military despotism, and partially cemented the heterogeneous elements of society into the materials for forming a nation. There is a dramatic incident, however, belonging to the time of Constantius, the son of Constantine, which shows how the government of a province may be administered, so as to become an instrument of official cruelty and rapacity. The story is told very circumstantially by Ammianus Marcellinus, who flourished within a quarter of a century of the period. In the year 350, Magnentius, whose father was a Briton, aimed at the supreme power of the Western empire; and his conspiracy was favoured by some portion of the army in Britain. Paulus, a Spaniard, was sent by Constantius to search out the offenders against his power. The revolt had been put down, and Magnentius slain; but Paulus came with his delegated authority to revel in all the abominations which avarice can inflict when it clothes itself in the robes of justice. What the judge Jefferies was to England in the seventeenth century, the notary Paulus was in the fourth century. Wherever there was wealth to be plundered, there was the accuser. At the tribunal of Paulus innocence was no protection, if the victim was worth the trouble of being hunted out of life. The pro-prefect, or vicar of Britain, Martinus, opposed the unjust judge. But he was destined to be involved in the general proscription of the rich and powerful. Driven to despair, he drew his sword upon the notary; but, missing his blow, he plunged the weapon into his own heart. There was no barrier then to the ravages of the tyrant; and Constantius applauded the executions and the tortures, the confiscations and the banishments, which were inflicted by his atrocious instrument. Julian, the succeeding emperor, commanded Paulus to be burnt alive.

Bronze Images, found in the Thames.

Constantine the Great.

There were troubles now coming upon the fertile provinces which were

more fatal than the occasional misgovernment of the imperial authorities. Those who ultimately had a considerable share in destroying the Roman civilisation, when its military strength was wholly withdrawn from Britain, now ventured to assail it when its defences were only weakened. In the year 360, the tribes whom we call Picts and Scots entered the provinces within the wall of Hadrian in considerable numbers. "It is remarkable," says an acute and learned historian, "that, from this period, the Caledonians and Maætæ, tribes which for two centuries had been the terror of the civilised Britons, disappear, without any ostensible cause, from the page of history." Dr. Lingard, from whom we quote, considers that the Picts were, under a new denomination, the very same people. Dr. Lappenberg speaks of the near relation of both these tribes to the Caledonians and Maætæ; and he adds, "it is certain that the Scots, and probably the Picts likewise, passed over from Ireland, and reduced the earlier inhabitants to subjection." The Scoti, who were undoubtedly Irish, ultimately gave their name to North Britain. These tribes, then, grown powerful in the fourth century, had gradually made inroads upon the Southern provinces; and, in the year 368, had carried their devastations as far as London. The Roman bands had given way before them, and their leaders had been slain. At length the great general, Theodosius, came over from Gaul with a considerable force, and drove back the marauders beyond the wall of Antoninus. The garrisons were re-established; the civil administration was reformed; and Britain once more appeared likely to return to the safety and peace of the preceding half century.

In the army of Theodosius was a leader named Maximus, of a distinguished British family. He had acquired high honour by his skill and bravery in the expulsion of the Scots and Picts; and was ultimately proclaimed by the army, emperor of Britain. He was probably supported by the British races, who prevailed, without much admixture, in Wales and Cornwall. In an evil hour he quitted the security of his island empire, and aspired to found a new continental branch of the Roman dominion. He was ultimately defeated and put to death in 388. During his five years of struggling power large numbers of the British had followed his fortunes in Gaul; and, after his fall, they refused to return to their native country. The old chroniclers, Gildas, Bede, Nennius, and Henry of Huntingdon, distinctly connect the settlement of a Roman-British colony in Gaul with the period of the usurpation of Maximus. Gildas says, "New races of tyrants sprang up, in terrific numbers; and the island, still bearing its Roman name, but casting off her institutes and laws, sent forth among the Gauls that bitter scion of her own planting, Maximus, with a great number of followers." He then recites the actions of this British leader, and adds: "After this, Britain is left deprived of all her soldiery and armed bands, of her cruel governors, and of the flower of her youth, who went with Maximus, and never again returned." William of Malmesbury puts the settlement of a British colony in Gaul at an earlier date—the time of Constantine. Some historians, on the other hand, consider that the immigration of the insular Britons into the country which received their name, Brittany, took place after the Saxon invasion. The story of Conan, the British chief, who led his followers to the walls of Paris, and there fought with Maximus against Gratian, is circumstantially

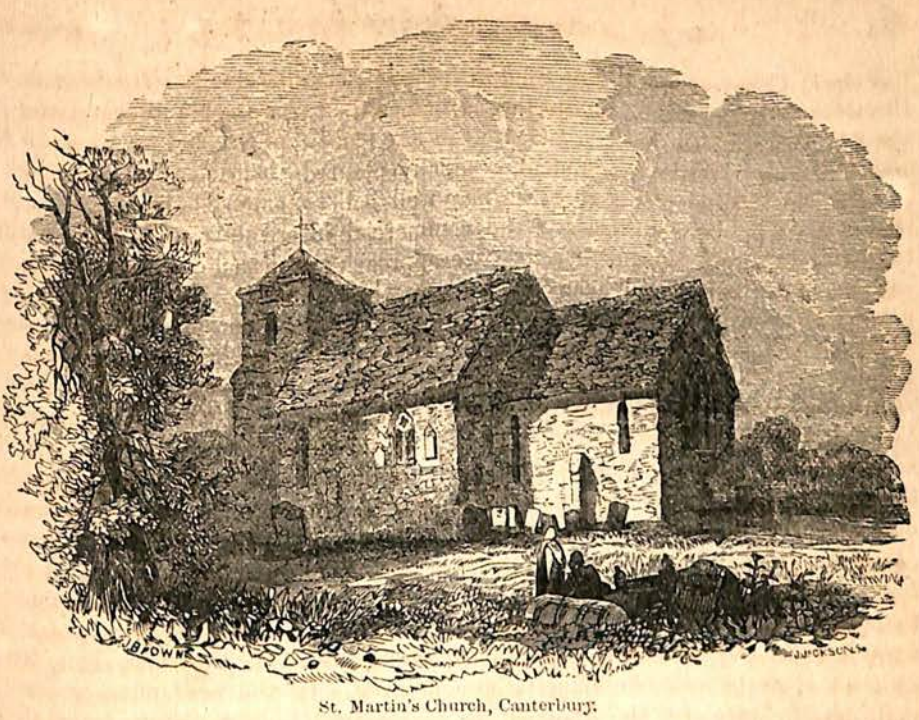
told in the histories of Brittany by D'Argentré and by Daru. Maximus and Conan separated. The British chief carried his legions to Armorica, where he founded that colony which for so many centuries had an intimate connection with Cornwall and Wales; where the same language as that of its Britannic founders was long spoken; which was a safe retreat for all who were harassed by Pict or Sea-King; and in which the great deeds of the British Arthur entered into the traditions of the people long after the Saxon rule in England had obliterated them. The hilly regions and craggy shores of Brittany had many points of resemblance to the mountains of Wales and the coasts of Cornwall; and they were each fitted for the abode of an enthusiastic race, equally brave; united by the same traditions which they derived from that ancient bardic order which was a part of Druidism; and each retaining many of the superstitions of their early faith, even amidst the rites of Christianity.

There is nothing in the story of the establishment of the British colony of Armorica, in the time of Maximus, that is in the least inconsistent with the subsequent history of Britain, as related by authorities who have secured more general confidence than the old British writers. The emigration to the western shores of Gaul may not have been so numerous as some believe, who put the number of armed warriors at a hundred thousand; but that there was a decided weakening of the military strength of the country, towards the end of the fourth century, is very manifest. The hordes of Alaric were overrunning Italy. When the remote British province was harassed by its fierce enemies from the Grampian mountains, and from the more dangerous neighbourhood of Galloway and Dumfries-shire, sometimes the Roman soldiers could be spared for their succour, and the invaders were driven back. When the Roman legions were recalled, the untiring enemies again came. The island was harassed within as well as from without. Pretenders to a sovereign power in the Roman province were set up, and as quickly deposed. Marcus and Gratian were rulers for a few months. Constantine, a soldier raised from the ranks, had a somewhat longer tenure of power; but leaving Britain, to carry on a more extended resistance to the Emperor Honorius, the Britons threw off their allegiance to the Roman authority, and by one vigorous effort repelled their fierce assailants by their own strength. Zosimus, the historian, records those events, as well as the concurrent establishment of an independent government by the Armoricans. "The neglect of Constantine," he says, "compelled both the inhabitants of the Britannic island, as well as some of the Celtic nations, to revolt from the empire of the Romans, and to live independent of them, no longer obeying their laws. The people, therefore, of Britain, taking up arms, and defying every danger, freed their cities from the invading barbarians. And the whole Armoric and other provinces of Gaul, imitating the Britons, liberated themselves in like manner, expelling the Roman præfects, and setting up a civil policy according to their own inclination."

Here, then, in the year 409, was our England an independent state. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,—the curious but meagre record of early events, which is supposed to have existed in the time of Alfred, and even to have been partly compiled by that great king,—there is the following entry, which singularly agrees with the chronology of Greek and Latin historians:—

"A. 409. This year the Goths took the city of Rome by storm, and after this the Romans never ruled in Britain, and this was about eleven hundred and ten years after it was built. Altogether they ruled in Britain four hundred and seventy years since Caius Julius first sought the land." The chronicler adds, under the year 418, "This year the Romans collected all the treasures that were in Britain, and some they hid in the earth, so that no one has since been able to find them, and some they carried with them into Gaul." Bede has the same account of the duration of the Roman rule. Procopius, who flourished in the sixth century, relating the defeat of Constantine and his son by Honorius, says, "The Romans no longer had it in their power to recover Britain; so that from this time it remained subject to usurpers." Gibbon recognises the value of these authorities, and observes, "Yet our modern historians and antiquaries extend the term of their dominion; and there are some who allow only the interval of a few months between their departure and the arrival of the Saxons." This theory of the date of the Roman dominion and the commencement of the Saxon, has arisen from the too common practice of dividing our history into great epochs, separated by imaginary lines from what has gone before and what is to come after. On the contrary, all great revolutions depend upon that social condition in which there is never any sudden change, but in which the most important changes do take place by almost imperceptible degrees. In the next chapter we shall briefly trace the social condition of England in the obscure interval between the Roman and the Saxon supremacy, in the first half of the fifth century.

Roman Ruins.



St. Martin's Church, Canterbury.

CHAPTER V.

Mixed Character of the Population—The British Church—Truth and Fable—Hengist and Horsa—Hostile bands of Settlers—Native seats of the Immigrants—Gregory the Great—Saxon Heathendom—Arrival of Augustin—Ethelbert—Conference at Augustin's Oak—Laws of Ethelbert—Edwin and Paulinus—Incessant Wars—Cultivation of Letters.

"THEY" (the Romans), says Bede, "resided within the rampart that Severus made across the island, on the south side of it; as the cities, temples, bridges, and paved ways do testify to this day." On the north of the wall were the nations that no severity had reduced to subjection, and no resistance could restrain from plunder. At the extreme west of England were the people of Cornwall, or little Wales, as it was called; having the most intimate relations with the people of Britannia Secunda, or Wales; and both connected with the colony of Armorica. The inhabitants of Cornwall and Wales, we may assume, were almost exclusively of the old British stock. The abandonment of the country by the Romans had affected them far less than that change affected the more cultivated country, that had been the earliest subdued, and for nearly four centuries had received the Roman institutions and adopted the Roman customs. But in the chief portion of the island, from the southern and eastern coasts to the Tyne and the Solway, there was a mixed population, amongst whom it would be difficult to trace that common bond which would constitute nationality. The British families

of the interior had become mingled with the settlers of Rome and its tributaries to whom grants of land had been assigned as the rewards of military service; and the coasts from the Humber to the Exe had been here and there peopled with northern settlers, who had gradually planted themselves amongst the Romanised British; and were, we may well believe, amongst the most active of those who carried forward the commercial intercourse of Britain with Gaul and Italy. When, therefore, we approach the period of what is termed the Saxon invasion, and hear of the decay, the feebleness, the cowardice, and the misery of the Britons—all which attributes have been somewhat too readily bestowed upon the population which the Romans had left behind—it would be well to consider what these so-called Britons really were, to enable us properly to understand the transition state through which the country passed.

Our first native historian is Gildas, who lived in the middle of the sixth century. "From the early part of the fifth century, when the Greek and Roman writers cease to notice the affairs of Britain, his narrative, on whatever authority it may have been founded, has been adopted without question by Bede and succeeding authors, and accepted, notwithstanding its barrenness of facts and pompous obscurity, by all but general consent, as the basis of early English history." * Gibbon has justly pointed out his inconsistencies, his florid descriptions of the flourishing condition of agriculture and commerce after the departure of the Romans, and his denunciations of the luxury of the people; when he, at the same time, describes a race who were ignorant of the arts, incapable of building walls of defence, or of arming themselves with proper weapons. When "this monk," as Gibbon calls him, "who, in the profound ignorance of human life, presumes to exercise the office of historian," tells us that the Romans, who were occasionally called in to aid against the Picts and Scots, "give energetic council to the timorous natives, and leave them patterns by which to manufacture arms," we seem to be reading an account of some remote tribe, to whom the Roman sword and buckler were as unfamiliar as the musket was to the Otaheitans when Cook first went amongst them. When Gildas describes the soldiers on the wall as "equally slow to fight and ill-adapted to run away;" and tells the remarkable incident, which forms part of every school-boy's belief, that the defenders of the wall were pulled down by great hooked weapons and dashed against the ground, we feel a pity akin to contempt for a people so stupid and passive, and are not altogether sorry that the Picts and Scots, "differing one from another in manners, but inspired with the same avidity for blood," had come with their bushy beards and their half-clothed bodies, to supplant so effeminate a race. When he makes this feeble people send an embassy to a Roman in Gaul to say, "The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians: thus two modes of death await us: we are either slain or drowned," we must wonder at the very straitened limits in which this unhappy people were shut up. Surely much of this is little more than the tumid rhetoric of the cloister; for all the assumptions that have been raised of the physical degeneracy of the people are quite unsupported by any real historical evidence. M. Guizot considers it unjust and cruel to view their humble supplications, so declared by Gildas, to Rome for aid, as evidences of

* Preface to Monumenta Historica Britannica, p. 60.

the effeminacy of that nation, whose resistance to the Saxons has given a chapter to history at a time when history has few traces of Italians, Spaniards, and Gauls. That the representations of Gildas could only be partially true, as applied to some particular districts, is sufficiently proved by the undoubted fact, that within little more than twenty years from the date of these cowardly demonstrations, Anthemius, the emperor, solicited the aid of the Britons against the Visigoths; and twelve thousand men from this island, under one of the native chieftains, Rhiothimus, sailed up the Loire, and fought under the Roman command. They are described by a contemporary Roman writer as quick, well-armed; turbulent and contumacious, from their bravery, their numbers, and their common agreement. These were not the people who were likely to have stood upon a wall to be pulled down by hooked weapons. They might have been the people who had clung, more than the other inhabitants of the Roman provinces, to their original language and customs; but it is not improbable that they would have been of the mixed races with whom Rome had been in more intimate relations, and to whom she continued to render offices of friendship after the separation of the island province from her empire.

Amidst all this conflict of testimony, there is the undoubted fact, that out of the Roman municipal institutions had risen the establishment of separate sovereignties, as Procopius relates. Britain, according to St. Jerome, was "a province fertile in tyrants." The Roman municipal government was kept compact and uniform under a great centralising power. It fell to pieces here, as in Gaul, when that power was withdrawn. It resolved itself into a number of local governments without any principle of cohesion. The vicar of the municipium became an independent ruler and head of a little republic; and that his authority was contested by some who had partaken of his delegated dignity, may be reasonably inferred. The difference of races would also promote the contests for command. If East Anglia contained a preponderance of one race of settlers, and Kent and Sussex of another, they might well quarrel for supremacy. But when all the settlers on the Saxon shore had lost the control and protection of the Count who once governed them, it may also be imagined that the more exclusively British districts would not readily co-operate for defence with those who were more strange to their kindred even than the Roman. All the European continent was in a state of political dislocation; and we may safely conclude that when the great power was shattered that had so long held the government of the world, the more distant and subordinate branch of its empire would resolve itself into some of the separate elements of authority and of imperfect obedience, by which a clan is distinguished from a nation.

Nor was the power of the Christian Church in Britain of a more united character than that of the civil rulers. No doubt a Church had been formed and organised, as we have already noticed. There were Bishops, so called, in the several cities; but their authority was little concentrated and their tenets were discordant. Pilgrimages were even made to the sacred places of Palestine; and at a very early period monasteries were founded. That of Bangor, or the great circle, seems to have had some relation to the ancient druidical worship, upon which it was probably engrafted in that region where Druidism had long flourished. There were British versions of the Bible.

But that the Church had no sustaining power at the period when civil society was so wholly disorganised, may be inferred from circumstances which preceded the complete overthrow of Christian rites by Saxon heathendom. Bede devotes several chapters of his "Ecclesiastical History" to the actions of St. Germanus, who came expressly to Britain to put down the Pelagian heresy; and, amidst the multitude of miraculous circumstances, records how "the authors of the perverse notions lay hid, and, like the evil spirits, grieved for the loss of the people that was rescued from them. At length, after mature deliberation, they had the boldness to enter the lists, and appeared, being conspicuous for riches, glittering in apparel, and supported by the flatteries of many." The people, according to Bede, were the judges of this great controversy; and gave their voices for the orthodox belief. Whether the Pelagians were expelled from Britain by reason or by force, it is evident that, in the middle of the fifth century, there was a strong element of religious disunion very generally prevailing; and that at a period when the congregations were in a great degree independent of each other, and therefore difficult of subjection to a common authority, the rich and the powerful had adopted a creed which was opposed to the centralising rule of the Romish Church, and were arguing about points of faith as strongly as they were contesting for worldly supremacy. Dr. Lappenberg justly points out this celebrated controversy in our country, as "indicating the weakness of that religious connection which was so soon to be totally annihilated." We may, in some degree, account for the reception of the doctrine of Pelagius by knowing that he was a Briton, whose plain unlatinised name was Morgan.

Macaulay has startled many a reader of the most familiar Histories of England, in saying—"Hengist and Horsa, Vortigern and Rowena, Arthur and Mordred, are mythical persons, whose very existence may be questioned, and whose adventures must be classed with those of Hercules and Romulus." It is difficult to write of a period of which the same writer has said, "an age of fable completely separates two ages of truth." Yet no one knew better than this accomplished historian himself, that an age of fable and an age of truth cannot be distinguished with absolute precision. It is not that what is presented to us through the haze of tradition must necessarily be unreal, any more than that what comes to us in an age of literature must be absolutely true. An historical fact, a real personage, may be handed down from a remote age in the songs of bards; but it is not therefore to be inferred that these national lyrics are founded upon pure invention. It is curious to observe that, wandering amidst these traces of events and persons that have been shaped into history, how ready we are to walk in the footsteps of some half-fabulous records, and wholly to turn away from others which seem as strongly impressed upon the shifting sands of national existence. We derive Hengist and Horsa from the old Anglo-Saxon authorities; and modern history generally adopts them. Arthur and Mordred have a Celtic origin, and they are as generally rejected as "mythical persons." It appears to us that it is as precipitate wholly to renounce the one as the other, because they are both surrounded with an atmosphere of the fabulous. Hengist and Horsa come to us encompassed with Gothic traditions that belong to other nations. Arthur presents himself with his attributes of the magician Merlin,

and the knights of the Round Table. But are we therefore to deny altogether their historical existence? In following the *ignis fatuus* of tradition, the credulous annalists of the monastic age were lost in the treacherous ground over which it led them. The more patient research of a critical age sees in that doubtful light a friendly warning of what to avoid, and hence a guide to more stable pathways.

Hengist and Horsa who, according to the Anglo-Saxon historians, landed in the year 449 on the shore which is called Ypwinesfleet, were personages of more than common mark. "They were the sons of Wihtgils; Wihtgils son of Witta, Witta of Wecta, Wecta of Woden." So says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and adds, "From this Woden sprung all our royal families." These descendants, in the third generation, from the great Saxon divinity, came over in three boats. They came by invitation of Wyrtgeone—Vortigern—king of the Britons. The king gave them land in the south-east of the country, on condition that they should fight against the Picts; and they did fight, and had the victory wheresoever they came. And then they sent for the Angles, and told them of the worthlessness of the people and the excellences of the land. This is the Saxon narrative. The seductive graces of Rowena, the daughter of Horsa, who corrupted the king of the Britons by love and wine, is an embellishment of the British traditions. Then came the great battles for possession of the land. At Aylesford and Crayford the Kentish Britons were overthrown. Before the Angles, the Welch fled like fire. These events occupy a quarter of a century. While they are going on, the Roman emperor, as we have mentioned upon indubitable authority, receives an auxiliary force of twelve thousand men from Britain. We cannot rely upon narratives that tell us of *the* king of the Britons, when we learn from no suspicious sources that the land was governed by many separate chiefs; and which represent a petty band of fugitives as gaining mighty triumphs for a great ruler, and then subduing him themselves in a wonderfully short time. The pretensions of Hengist and Horsa to be the immediate descendants of Woden would seem to imply their mythical origin. But many Saxon chiefs of undoubted reality rested their pretensions upon a similar genealogy. The myth was as flattering to the Anglo-Saxon pride of descent, as the corresponding myth that the ancient inhabitants of the island were descended from the Trojan Brute was acceptable to the British race. But amidst much of fable there is the undoubted fact that Germanic tribes were gradually possessing themselves of the fairest parts of Britain—a progressive usurpation, far different from a sudden conquest. Amidst the wreck of the social institutions left by Rome, when all that remained of a governing power was centred in the towns, it may be readily conceived that the rich districts of the eastern and southern coasts would be eagerly peopled by new settlers, whose bond of society was founded upon the occupation of the land; and who, extending the area of their occupation, would eventually come into hostile conflict with the previous possessors.

For a century and a half a thick darkness seems to overspread the history of our country. In the Anglo-Saxon writers we can trace little, with any distinctness, beyond the brief and monotonous records of victories and slaughters. Hengist and Æsc slew four troops of Britons with the edge of the sword. Hengist then vanishes, and Ælla comes with his three sons.

In 491 they besieged Andres-cester, "and slew all that dwelt therein, so that not a single Briton was there left." Then come Cerdic and Cynric his son; then Port and his two sons, and land at Portsmouth; and so we reach the sixth century. Cerdic and Cynric now stand foremost amongst the slaughterers, and they establish the kingdom of the West Saxons, and conquer the Isle of Wight. In the middle of the century Ida begins to reign, from whom arose the royal race of North-humbria. In 565 Ethelbert succeeded to the kingdom of the Kentish-men, and held it fifty-three years. The war goes on in the South-midland counties where Cuthwulf is fighting; and it reaches the districts of the Severn where Cuthwine and Ceawlin slay great kings, and take Gloucester, and Cirencester, and Bath. One of these fierce brethren is killed at last, and Ceawlin, "having taken many spoils and towns innumerable, wrathful returned to his own." Where "his own" was, we are not informed. We reach, at length, the year 596, when "Pope Gregory sent Augustin to Britain, with a great many monks, who preached the word of God to the nation of the Angles." Bede very judiciously omits all such details. He tells us that "they carried on the conflagration from the eastern to the western sea, without any opposition, and almost covered all the superficies of the perishing island. Public as well as private structures were overturned; the priests were everywhere slain before the altars; the prelates and the people, without any respect of persons, were destroyed with fire and sword." There is little to add to these impressive words, which no doubt contain the general truth. But if we open the British history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, we find ourselves relieved from the thick darkness of the Anglo-Saxon records, by the blue lights and red lights of the most wondrous romance. Rowena comes with her golden wine-cup. Merlin instructs Vortigern how to discover the two sleeping dragons who hindered the foundation of his tower. Aurelius, the Christian king, burns Vortigern in his Cambrian city of refuge. Eldol fights a duel with Hengist, cuts off his head, and destroys the Saxons without mercy. Merlin the magician, and Uther Pendragon, with fifteen thousand men, bring over "the Giants' Dance" from Ireland, and set it up in Salisbury plain. Uther Pendragon is made

the Christian king over all Britain. At length we arrive at Arthur, the son of Uther. To him the entire monarchy of Britain belonged by hereditary right. Hoel sends him fifteen thousand men from Armorica, and he makes the Saxons his tributaries; and with his own hand kills four hundred and seventy in one battle. He not only conquers the Saxons, but subdues Gaul, amongst other countries, and holds his court in Paris. His coronation at the City of the Legions (Caer-Leon) is gorgeous beyond all recorded magnificence; and the general state of the country, in these days of Arthur, before the middle of the sixth century, is thus described:—"At that time, Britain had arrived at such a pitch of grandeur, that in abundance of riches, luxury of ornaments, and politeness of inhabitants, it far surpassed all other kingdoms." Mordred, the wicked traitor, at length disturbs all this tranquillity and grandeur, and brings over barbarous people from different countries. Arthur falls in battle. The Saxons prevail; and the Britons retire into Cornwall and Wales.

Amidst the bewildering mass of the obscure and the fabulous which our history presents of the first century and a half of the Saxon colonisation, there are some well-established facts which are borne out by subsequent investigations. Such is Bede's account of the country of the invaders, and the parts in which they settled. This account, compared with other authorities, gives us the following results. They consisted of "the three most powerful nations of Germany,—Saxons, Angles, and Jutes." The Saxons came from the parts which, in Bede's time, were called the country of the Old Saxons. That country is now known as the Duchy of Holstein. These, under Ella, founded the kingdom of the South Saxons,—our present Sussex. Later in the fifth century, the same people, under Cerdic, established themselves in the district extending from Sussex to Devonshire and Cornwall, which was the kingdom of the West Saxons. Other Saxons settled in Essex and Middlesex. The Angles, says Bede, came from "the country called Angelland, and it is said from that time to remain desert to this day." There is a part of the Duchy of Sleswig, to the north of Holstein, which still bears the name of Angel or Angeln. These people gave their name to the whole country, Engla-land, or Angla-land, from the greater extent of territory which they permanently occupied. As the Saxons possessed themselves of the southern coasts, the Angles established themselves on the north-eastern. Their kingdom of East Anglia comprised Norfolk and Suffolk, as well as part of Cambridgeshire; and they extended themselves to the north of the Humber, forming the powerful state of Northumbria, and carrying their dominion even to the Forth and the Clyde. The Jutes came from the country north of the Angles, which is in the upper part of the present Sleswig; and they occupied Kent and the Isle of Wight, with that part of Hampshire which is opposite the island. Sir Francis Palgrave is of opinion that "the tribes by whom Britain was invaded appear principally to have proceeded from the country now called Friesland; for of all the continental dialects the ancient Frisick is the one which approaches most nearly to the Anglo-Saxon of our ancestors." Mr. Craik has pointed out that "the modern kingdom of Denmark comprehends all the districts from which issued, according to the old accounts, the several tribes who invaded Britain upon the fall of the Roman empire. And the *Danes* proper (who may be considered to represent the Jutes); the

Angles, who live between the Bight of Flensborg and the river Schley on the Baltic; the *Frisons*, who inhabit the islands along the west coast of Jutland, with a part of the bailiwick of Husum in Sleswig; and the *Germans* of Holstein (Bede's Old Saxons) are still all recognised by geographers and ethnographers as distinct races."*

Connected with the early name of the country is the well-known story of Gregory the Great. The scene of this story is papal Rome—the Rome which had lost her provinces, and was no longer the seat of empire; which dreaded the hostile approach of the Lombards; whose Campagna was a wilderness, and whose Tiber deluged the city which it once refreshed; whose citizens depended for their food upon the precarious supplies of Sicily and Egypt; and whose noble monuments were tottering to decay. In this miserable city dwelt the monk Gregory, who was destined to raise the condition of its inhabitants, and to relieve it from some of its sorrows and fears, when he should become its spiritual and temporal ruler. In the market-place of Rome were exposed to sale some youthful slaves—fair-skinned and comely, with the long hair which was regarded as a mark of good descent. They are Angles—Angli,—said the dealers in slaves, who had probably bought them from the southern tribes who had captured them in battle. "They have an angelic mien," said the monk, "and it becomes such to be coheirs with the angels in Heaven." They come from the province of Deira, said the merchants (Northumbria was divided into Deira and Bernicia). "It is well," said the priest; "*de ira eruti*, snatched from wrath, and called to the mercy of Christ." Lastly, he was told that the king of the province was Ella. "*Alle*luiah," said the good father; "the praise of God the Creator must be sung in those parts." Bede tells this singular history with evident admiration of the happy conceits of the great churchman. It is possible that they were the inventions of the cloister. But the fact that British slaves were an article of traffic is undoubted; and it is equally true that Gregory, however touched by the ambitious spirit of his church, was a man of truly Christian benevolence. "In the use of wealth," says one not ordinarily favourable to ecclesiastical power, "he acted like a faithful steward of the church and the poor, and liberally supplied to their wants the inexhaustible resources of abstinence and order. . . . . Such was the extreme sensibility of his conscience, that, for the death of a beggar who had perished in the streets, he interdicted himself during several days from the exercise of sacerdotal functions."† Such a man would perceive that there was a noble field for his pious exertions in the conversion of that Britain which had relapsed into heathendom. He was forbidden to undertake the mission himself; but he never neglected the duty which the fair-skinned slaves of the Roman market-place had presented to his imagination, and which he ultimately carried out in a spirit in which zeal was happily blended with prudence.

The heathendom which Gregory ardently desired to overthrow had taken a very deep root in the country before the arrival of the Christian missionaries. Woden was the Mercury of the Saxons. William of Malmesbury, speaking of the pretensions of Hengist and Horsa to be descended from him,

* Outlines of the History of the English Language, by George L. Craik. 2nd Ed. 1855.

† Gibbon, chap. xlv.

says, "They were great-grandsons of the most ancient Woden, from whom almost all the royal families of these barbarous nations deduce their origin; and to whom the nations of the Angles, fondly deifying him, have consecrated the fourth day of the week, and the sixth day unto his wife Frea, by a sacrilege which lasts even unto this day." To nim were human victims sacrificed. That his worship was universally spread in England is shown, according to Mr. Kemble, by the extreme frequency of names of places compounded with his name. Thus, the ancient fortification Wansdike, is Woden's dike. Thor, the thunderer, the god of storms and rains, wielding his terrible hammer, was the Saxon Jupiter, as Tiw was their Mars. Frea, according to Mr. Kemble, was a god; and Woden's wife was Fricge. There were lesser gods—Baldr, and Geat, and Sætere, or Saturn. Goddesses were numerous. Eastre survives in the great festival of the Church. Their mythology included Fiends, and Monsters, and Fates. "The weird sisters" of Macbeth comes from the Wyrd, who weave the web of destiny. There was hero-worship, too, in which the rude but imaginative man recognised some great attribute of courage or goodness, which he exalted into a power below his divinities, but calling for his habitual reverence. Perhaps we have been too much accustomed to look only at the revolting aspect of these superstitions; and not to see in them that, however debasing in some essentials, they were manifestations of a spirit which did not walk in the material world without believing in some presiding influences which governed human actions. In this rude mythology we see glimpses of a belief in a future life, and of a state of rewards and punishments. That the mythology of the nations who overran England in the fifth and sixth centuries, and swept away whatever remained of Roman rites, with all that had been created of Christian worship, was a great dominant principle in the life of the people, admits of little question. But, at the same time, it possessed some capacity of assimilation with that faith before which the classical

paganism of the ancient world had retreated. Mr. Kemole points out the pregnant fact in the history of our Anglo-Saxon progenitors, at the commencement of the sixth century, "that Christianity met but little resistance among them, and enjoyed an easy triumph, or, at the worst, a careless acquiescence, even among those whose pagan sympathies could not be totally overcome."*

"This year," A.D. 597, says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "Augustin and his companions came to the land of the Angles." The earnest wish of Gregory had at length been carried out. At the first command of his spiritual superior, Augustin and his companions set forward. But the difficulties of the journey, the dread of a hostile reception from a fierce people, and the ignorance of the language of those whom they would seek to teach and to convert, not unnaturally restrained their ardour. The zealous Pope would accept no excuse for desisting from a good work; but he smoothed the way of the missionaries through France, by recommending them to regal and priestly affection and comfort. They landed in the Isle of Thanet, in number about forty. "At that time," says Bede, "Ethelbert was the powerful King of Kent, who had extended his dominions as far as the great river Humber, by which the southern Saxons are divided from the northern." In the first Ethelbert we recognise the existence of some powerful authority which appears to belong to the title of king. Numerous chieftains, whose continual wars with the British inhabitants and amongst themselves have no historical interest, had passed away, and a gradual consolidation of territory and rule had taken place throughout the island. In the Kentish kingdom were now included those of Essex and Sussex, as a confederation acknowledging the supremacy of Ethelbert. The kingdom of the West Saxons was another powerful confederation, which ultimately became the acknowledged seat of the sovereignty of England. East Anglia had its defined boundaries in the extreme east of the island. Mercia claimed much of the remainder of England east of the Severn and south of the Humber; but at the time of Ethelbert, successful policy and warfare had subjected its petty sovereigns to the authority of the Kentish king. Northumbria, uniting the two kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, extended beyond the Humber to the Border-land. There, in the north, were the Picts and Scots. In the farther west of England, and throughout Wales, were large portions of the unsubdued British race. We thus see how far the people of this country, at the beginning of the seventh century, were essentially different from the condition of one nation, united by common laws, possessing equal progress in industry and accumulated wealth, and having any great bond for defence or social improvement. In the kingdoms we have enumerated there were many sovereignties, of which the heads claimed royal descent and consequent superiority. The royal pedigree always went up to Woden, and often into a remoter antiquity. No doubt the rival claims to descent from kings and deities were the cause of perpetual wars, and stimulated the hostilities of tribe against tribe. The belief that in these kingdoms of the Germanic races there was any community of civil or warlike operation, is one of those hasty theories which modern research has effectually dispelled. The historian Rapin says of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, "They formed their Witena gemot, or assembly of wise men, to settle the

* The Saxons in England, vol. i. p. 443.

common affairs of the seven kingdoms, and conferred the command of their armies upon one chosen out of the seven kings, to whom, for that reason no doubt, some have given the title of Monarch." In later histories, upon which greater research has been bestowed as regards our early period, this "Monarch" is called a "Bretwalda." Without entering upon the controversial matters that arise out of the belief or non-belief in this real or unsubstantial dignity, we are disposed to give credit to the argument of Mr. Kemble, however strongly put, that, up to the period of which we are speaking, and indeed much later, "there is not the slightest evidence of a king exercising a central authority; and very little, at any time, of a combined action among the Saxons; and that it is quite as improbable that any Saxon king should ever have had a federal army to command, as it is certainly false that there ever was a general Witena gemot for him to preside over." *

To Ethelbert, then, the king of one of the most fertile portions of England, came the missionaries of Pope Gregory. They had taken with them "interpreters of the nation of the Franks." The king had married Berhta, the daughter of Charibert, king of the Franks, who, by the terms of her marriage contract, enjoyed the exercise of Christian worship, in the church of Saint Martin at Canterbury, which had subsisted from the Roman times of Christianity in Britain. There was, no doubt, commercial intercourse between France and England about that period; for the Anglo-Saxons who traded to Rouen are recognised as frequenting the great fair of St. Denis.† With these interpreters, then, Augustin had an interview with the Kentish king. He received the missionaries in the open air; "for he had taken precaution that they should not come to him in any house, according to the ancient superstition, lest, if they had any magical arts, they might at their coming impose upon him, and get the better of him." ‡ He probably received them in one of the sacred boundaries over which Woden presided. They came, bearing a silver cross and a painted image, singing the Litany and offering up prayers.

* The Saxons in England, book ii. chap. i. † Lappenberg, vol. i. p. 131.
‡ Bede, book i. chap. xxvi.

The king was not enthusiastic, but he was tolerant. He declined to forsake what he had so long followed with his people; but he allowed the missionaries publicly to teach their religion, and gave them a dwelling-place in his metropolis of Canterbury. In due time Ethelbert became himself a convert.

In the history of Bede there is given a remarkable correspondence between Gregory and Augustin in answer to many questions of the missionary. The politic Pope appears, in one of his letters, to have held no bigoted view of the customs in which one church differed from another, as the Roman and Gallican differed, but desired Augustin to impress upon the new converts those great principles upon which Christianity rested. "Choose from the several churches whatever is pious, and religious, and right, and these, gathered as it were into one whole, instil as observances into the minds of the Angles." * And yet Augustin, in a conference with some of the ecclesiastics of the original British church, demanded so authoritatively, in his episcopal character, that they should conform to the Roman time of celebrating Easter, and to the Roman manner of baptism, that they refused to acknowledge him as their archbishop. Bede tells this story with characteristic ingenuousness. He records that Augustin performed a miracle which greatly moved the British priests to listen to him; but that one offence against the spirit of the Gospel made them reject his authority. After a first conference, at which the British ecclesiastics desired to consult their people before they departed from their ancient customs, they repaired to seek the advice of a certain holy and discreet hermit. He told them, "If the man is of God, follow him." "How," said they, "are we to know that?" He answered,—"Our Lord saith, Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. If, therefore, Augustin is meek and lowly of heart, it is to be believed that he has taken upon himself the yoke of Christ, and offers it to you to take upon yourselves. But if he is haughty and proud, it is manifest that he is not of God, and that we need not regard his words." Again, they said, "How shall we discern this?" The anchorite replied, "Arrange it so that he first arrive with his company at the place of conference; and if, at your approach, he shall rise up to meet you, do you, being then assured that he is the servant of Christ, hear him obediently. But if he shall despise you, and not rise up to

Augustin. From the Door of the Chapter-House, Rochester.

* Bede, book i. chap. xxvii.

you, who are the greater in number, let him also be contemned of you." They came to the place of conference, where Augustin was seated, and Augustin did not rise. They applied the test. There was no union between the Anglo Saxon and the British church; and Augustin threatened that if they would not accept peace with their brothers, they should have war with their enemies. Dr. Lingard sneeringly calls the advice of the anchorite a "sapient admonition, which left to accident the decision of the controversy." * It was a controversy about points of discipline only, according to the same authority. The ministers of the ancient British church, who had maintained the Christian doctrine amidst the changes and terrors of three centuries, refused to admit the authority in formulas of one who did not exhibit in his outward bearing the principle upon which every ordinance should rest. The vengeance with which they were threatened finally came upon them in the massacre of Bangor. On that terrible day, when Ethelfrith, the Bernician, advanced against the Britons, the monks of Bangor, who had fled to the army headed by the chief of Powis, knelt upon the battle-field, and prayed for the safety of their countrymen. The Pagan Saxon ordered the unarmed band to be massacred, "for if they are crying to God for my enemies, then they fight against me, though without arms." Taliesin, the British bard, was present at the great conflict:

> "I saw the oppression of the tumult; the wrath and tribulation;
> The blades gleaming on the bright helmets." †

The memory of Augustin has been stained by the reproach that he excited this massacre in a spirit of revenge against those who, in the language of Bede, "had disdained his counsels for their eternal salvation." The fierce prophecy of Augustin, even without his direct intervention, might have had much to do with its cruel accomplishment. Bede says, that the great Roman missionary was dead at the time of this event. Some affirm that this passage in Bede is an interpolation. Be that as it may, the spirit of the prophecy was anti-Christian; and Wordsworth justly says, in a note to his Sonnet, "The Monastery of Old Bangor," that Bede's account "suggests a most striking warning against national and religious prejudices."

Before the death of Ethelbert, in 616, he promulgated a code of laws, according to the counsel of wise men. "For this improvement," we are told, "he was indebted to the suggestions of the missionaries." ‡ Bede, who is the authority in this particular, tells us nothing of the sort. He indeed says, that Ethelbert, "in the first place, set down what satisfaction he should make who stole any thing belonging to the Church, or the bishops, or the other clergy, resolving to give protection to those whose doctrine he had embraced." § The laws of Ethelbert were a collection of the ordinances in practical application amongst the Saxon people for the administration of justice; and they continued in force, with variations that very slightly affected their principle, for several centuries. They were the Common Law of the Germanic tribes, reduced in Ethelbert's kingdom to a statutory form, at the beginning of the seventh century. They were founded upon the principle of pecuniary compensation for every offence against person and

* Lingard, chap. ii.
† Turner, Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. book iii. chap. v.
‡ Lingard, chap. ii.
§ Bede, book ii. chap. v.

property. Out of these brief "dooms," as they are called, we may collect a faithful picture, as far as it goes, of the state of society.* In the first article for the protection of the Church, we find recited the several degrees of bishop, priest, deacon, clerk. It was not held that damages, to use a familiar word of explanation, were to be paid without respect of persons, but that a bishop was to be compensated elevenfold, and a clerk threefold of the value of any stolen property. The amends, atonement, or indemnification, was called "bōt." The king's bōt was always the largest, except in the case of the bishop, who had twofold higher compensation for theft even than the king. If a man slew another in the king's "tun" (dwelling, with lands appertaining), he was to pay fifty shillings; if in that of an "eorl," (jarl, noble), twelve shillings. The slayer of the "hlaf-æta" (loaf-eater, domestic) of a "ceorl" (churl, freeman not noble), was to atone by six shillings. The mutilation of an "esne" (slave), was to be compensated to the owner at the full worth of the slave. The penalties for personal injuries to freemen are amongst the most curious of these dooms. It was not "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," but the eye had a pecuniary value, and so had the tooth. The evil consequence of the infliction, and not the motive of the offender, regulated the amount of the amends. Thus, if an ear was struck off, the bōt was twelve shillings; but "if the other ear hear not, let bōt be made with twenty-five shillings." In all cases of default of payment the remedy was prompt and effective. The offender became a penal slave. This principle of compensation, even for the highest class of offences, is no doubt indicative of a rude state of society. But it could not have subsisted so long without an adaptation, however incomplete, to the condition of the great body of the community. The law of the state fixed a value upon every man's life, according to his degree; which price, in the event of his being slain, was to be paid to his relatives. In the same way, it fixed a tariff upon all personal injuries that did not destroy life, and upon the outrages upon a man's domestic honour. It was the principle which interposed to avert, in some practical form, the terrible evils of private feud. Tacitus, writing of the German nations, distinctly shows us whence these Anglo-Saxon laws were derived, and upon what reason they were founded. "The enmities, as well as the friendships, of father and kindred, they were bound to take up. Nor do their enmities remain implacable; for compensation is made even for homicide by a fixed number of sheep and cattle, and so the whole house is satisfied. Useful is this for the state, for feuds are the most dangerous where there is freedom." † It was the personal liberty of the Saxon man, and the holding together for mutual defence or revenge of the Saxon family, that rendered necessary this rude law of compensation. The Christian missionaries would have vainly laboured to introduce the Roman law amongst a people with whom the assertion of individual right was stronger than any bond of subjection to the state. But when we speak of personal liberty and family alliance, we speak only of what regards a small portion of the community. The greater number were unfree. They were serfs. Whatever compensation the law gave to the owner of a slave for his murder or mutilation by another, the owner was himself privileged to murder or

* The most ancient MS. of these Dooms is of the 12th century, and they are published in "The Ancient Laws and Institutes of England," issued by the Record Commission.

† Germ. xxii.

mutilate him without accountability to any earthly tribunal. The only restraint was that he thus destroyed his own property. When the serf was past service, the master would be at liberty to destroy him, as even civilised Rome slew the useless slave. Pecuniary compensation for any offence the serf might commit was out of the question. He had no property, and he paid by yielding his body to the lash. There was no limitation to the amount of labour exacted from him. He might come into the servile condition as a captive in war, as an offender who had no power of compensation, or as a slave by birth. Manumission was rare; for if the slave were admitted to the privileges of civil society, it was necessary for his owner to provide him with land upon which to settle. His skill as a labourer gave him no title to freedom, nor afforded him the possibility of maintaining himself in a state of independence, unless he held land. The agricultural services, whether of male or female, were almost wholly discharged by serfs. The ploughman was the highest labourer on the soil; the smith the most esteemed handicraftsman. They might have small advantages over other serfs; but each was nevertheless a chattel of his lord. There were poor freemen, no doubt, who held land upon the consideration of a labour-rent; but far the greater number of all labourers were serfs. Their mere physical wants were probably not ill-supplied; and one of the blessings that Christianity brought to the land was, that the Church constantly strove to mitigate the hard lot of the unfree, and out of that portion of its possessions, which was set apart for the poor, did often maintain the old and worn-out slave, when his master cast him off by an act of emancipation. The authority of the Church procured, moreover, the great body of toil-worn slaves a day of rest in every week —it gave them the Christian Sunday. But these healing influences were naturally slow and uncertain in producing a general amelioration of the labourer's lot; and thus, whatever might be the value of Saxon institutions to the free, we must pass on through centuries of serfdom before we can truly find a People.

The history of the establishment of Christianity in the seventh century is, to a great extent, the only portion of our history before Alfred which has an abiding human interest. What is generally called the history of the Heptarchy, or the Octarchy, is a dull chronicle of fierce hostilities and treacherous alliances, which affect us little more than the wars and truces of Choctaws and Cherokees. But when we come to the story of the conversion of king Edwin by Paulinus, we are once again in the society of men, and not of fighting savages. Edwin is king of Northumbria. His youth has been one of exile and suffering. He has regained his kingdom, and has married the Christian daughter of Ethelbert of Kent. Paulinus, an ordained bishop, had come with the young Princess Ethelburga to Edwin's country, and had sought in vain to convert the king. An assassin, sent by the king of the West Saxons, attempted the life of Edwin; but the king was saved by the fidelity of one of his nobles, who interposed his own body to avert the death-stroke from his lord. At the same hour Ethelburga bore a daughter. The young king vowed, that if he could obtain a victory over him who had sent the assassin, he would renounce his idols. The victory was gained. The king, proceeding with caution, summoned his council, after he had long pondered the instructions of Paulinus; and he received from the bishop a

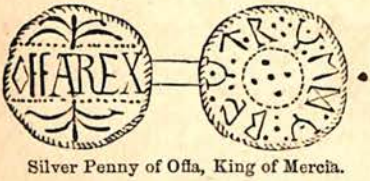
sign, that a promise made to him, in the days of his adversity, in a miraculous vision, had been accomplished in his restoration to power, and was now to be acknowledged by his spiritual obedience. Bede tells us the entire story with his usual charming simplicity, when he deals with a romantic subject. At the council of the king, the chief priest of Heathendom, by name Coifi, gave a very satisfactory reason for believing that the old religion had no virtue in it: "For not one of your people has applied himself more diligently to the worship of our gods than I have; and yet there are many who have received from you greater benefits and greater honours, and are more prosperous in all their undertakings; whereas, if the gods were good for any thing, they would rather forward me, who have been so zealous to serve them." Is this Saxon notion of measuring the divine approbation by the amount of worldly advantage quite extinct among us? This is the prose of the narrative. Now we come to the poetry. An old eorl stood up and said:—"The life of man, O king, seems to me, in comparison with that which is hidden from us, to be like the sparrow, who, in the winter-time, as you sit in your hall with your thanes and attendants, warmed with the fire that is lighted in the midst, rapidly flies through, to seek shelter from the chilling storms of rain and snow without. As he flies through, entering by one door and passing out by another, he has a brief escape from the storm, and enjoys a momentary calm. Again he goes forth to another winter and vanishes from your sight. So also seems the short life of man. Of what went before it, or of what is to follow, we know not. If, therefore, this new doctrine brings us something more certain, in my mind it is worthy of adoption." Then Paulinus discoursed of God and the true worship with Edwin and Coifi, and the king and the priest were converted. The idols were to be smitten, and the sacred

places profaned; but who, said the king, will accomplish that work? Coifi answered, "I. For who is fitter to destroy, through the wisdom given unto me from God, those things that I have worshipped in my ignorance?" Then Coifi mounted a horse, and took a lance, in defiance of the ordinance that forbade a sacrificing priest to ride, except upon a mare, or to bear arms; and he hurled his lance against the idol, and the temple was set on fire.*

The century which saw the establishment of Christianity amongst the Anglo-Saxons, and the succeeding century, was a period of incessant wars. The Pagan princes were sometimes in the ascendant; sometimes the converted. Sometimes princes who had listened to the Christian teachers and had been baptised, relapsed into Paganism; sometimes they enthusiastically threw away their power, and became monks. Oswald, the Northumbrian, kneels before the cross in the neighbourhood of Hexham, and defeats the British Cædwalla. Penda, the fierce king of Mercia, slays Oswald on the field of Maserfelth. Then Oswin overthrows Penda, the last and most powerful upholder of Saxon heathendom, who assailed every neighbouring state with remorseless cruelty. Then Wulfere, the son of Penda, regains the dominion of Mercia, and is conqueror of Wessex. Ethelbald succeeds to his power, but yields to the West Saxons, upon whom he had partly imposed his yoke. Offa, who has written his name upon the great dyke reaching from the neighbourhood of Chester to the Wye, subjugates the ancient Britons, and ravages their territory; whilst the whole of the Anglo-Saxon states submit to his empire. Amidst these changes of fortune,—dire reverses, and horrible triumphs,—which were only partially brought to an end when Egbert of Wessex attained something like a supremacy at the beginning of the ninth century, and England had taken a place amongst the

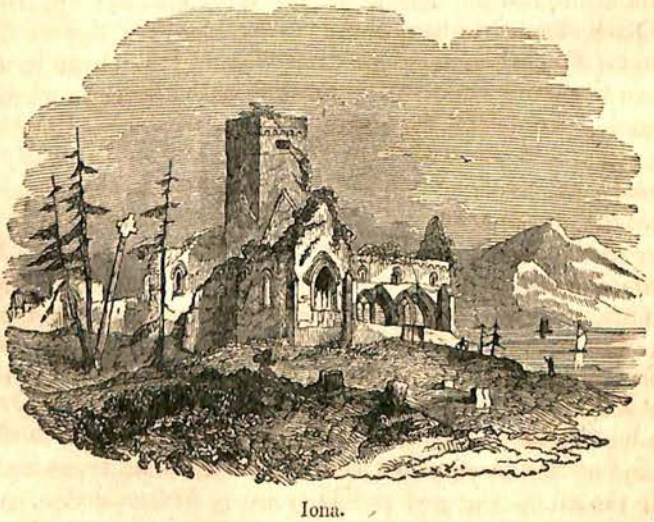
* Bede, book ii. chap. xiv.

Christian communities of Europe,—it is consoling to turn from the outrages of barbarous chieftains to the contemplation of the learned and the pious, in their peaceful cells, keeping alive that flame of knowledge which without them might have been extinguished for ages. Out of his cloisters at Iona the light of piety and learning is first shed by Columba over the darkness of the northern Picts. Wilfred, the Bishop of York, builds churches in his diocese; and also teaches industrial arts to the South Saxons. Benedict Biscop, the Abbot of Wearmouth, fills his monastery with books and pictures which he brought from Rome. Cædmon, the cowherd, sings The Creation, and the Fall, in strains which have obtained for him the name of the Saxon Milton. Adhelm, whose Anglo-Latin poetry manifests his accomplishments,—a minstrel as well as a poet,—stands upon the bridge of Malmesbury, and as the peasants pass to and fro, gathers a crowd to listen to some of the popular songs to the accompaniment of his harp, and gradually weaves into the verses holy words of exhortation. Bede, a monk of undoubted genius and vast learning, sits in his cell at Jarrow, and amidst other worthy monuments of his piety and knowledge, gathers the obscure history of his country out of doubtful annals and imperfect traditions, weaving them into a narrative which we feel to be a conscientious one, however intermixed with stories which we, somewhat presumptuously, term superstitious. These men, and many illustrious fellow-labourers, struggled through the days of heathendom, and scarcely saw the full establishment of Christianity in this land. But the influences of what they taught gradually wrought that change which made the English one nation, under one creed. In the meantime knowledge is leading on to general civilisation. "The darkness begins to break: and the country which had been lost to view as Britain re-appears as England." *



Silver Penny of Offa, King of Mercia.

* Macaulay.


Iona.

Anglo-Saxon mantle, caps, and weapons.

CHAPTER VI.

Egbert at the Court of Charlemagne—Alcuin—Egbert, King of Wessex—Reduces the other provinces to his supremacy—The Northmen, or Danes—Their ravages in England and France—Ethelwulf—Birth of Alfred—His early years—His sojourn at Rome—Ethelbald—Ethelbert—Alfred's residence with Ethelbert—Social ranks—Rural Industry.

It is the last year of the eighth century. There is an English exile at the Court of Charlemagne, who, for thirteen years, has been a humble follower of the fortunes of the great king of the Franks. Egbert, the son of Alckmund, king of Kent, aspired to the crown of the West Saxons; but Beortric was preferred. Each claimed to be descended from Cerdic. Egbert fled to Offa, king of Mercia; but when Offa gave his daughter Edburga in marriage to Beortric there was no longer safety for him with a king to whom treachery and assassination were familiar instruments of his will. Charlemagne was one of those remarkable men whose influence M. Guizot has justly described: "Why a great man comes at a particular epoch, and what force of his own he puts into the development of the world, no one can say. This is the secret of Providence; but nevertheless the fact is certain." * Such a man does sometimes come to put an end to anarchy and social stagnation—a terrible and often a tyrannical power. Such a man was Charlemagne. He drove back the barbarian forces that were pressing forward against the establishment of European civilisation, by his power as a conqueror. He reduced the scattered elements of authority and justice into a system, by his skill as an administrator. He gave the grape of the South to the shores of the Rhine, and otherwise extended the domain of fertility, as a physical improver. He raised up the real civilising power of knowledge to render his

* Civilisation en Europe. Troisième Leçon.

triumphs of war and peace of permanent utility, by his zeal as a patriot and his sympathy as a student. In this school was Egbert, the Kentish exile, educated. As he marched with the armies of the great king against the Lombards and the Bavarians, the Huns and the Saxons, he saw war upon as grand a scale as the world had ever beheld. Compared with the artillery of modern times, the catapults of Charles were feeble instruments. But his myriads of armed tributaries, sweeping the countries from the Rhone to the Danube, or descending from the Alps like swarms of locusts, struck terror into the nations that he came to reduce to his obedience. Wherever he marched there was the same mighty array of horse and foot, drawn from all the provinces of his empire; and round the mailed conqueror ever gathered a train of bishops and priests, singing rejoicing hymns, as the terrible sword "Gaudiosa" gleamed in the eyes of the idolatrous Saxons or the rebellious Italians.* Fearful were the massacres of those who refused to accept Christianity at the hands of the remorseless Frank. We gladly turn from such scenes to look at the great Charles pursuing his bloodless victories over ignorance and anarchy—the lawgiver and the schoolmaster. The latter would seem a strange title to give to a man who had headed fifty-three expeditions against Saxons, Lombards, Arabs, Thuringians, Huns, Bretons, Bavarians, Slavonians, Saracens, Danes, Greeks, and Aquitanians.† Charlemagne had a school in which he received many pupils; and selected his professors from the most accomplished scholars of his age. The chief professor was Alcuin, an Englishman. It was not only a school for teaching Latin and Greek, but a school for "common things." Wherever the king travelled, this "School of the Palace" went with him; and there his sons, his daughters, his sisters, his privy-councillors, his clergy, in companionship with himself, received their lessons of elementary knowledge. From a specimen which has been preserved of these lessons, it would appear that, in the form of dialogue, the "Seven Sciences," such as they were then known, were taught in a very attractive shape; and these were mixed up with enigmatical questions which acted as a spur upon the mental activity of the learners. In this school, no doubt, Egbert of Kent was taught. Frequent, we may presume, were his conversations with his countryman Alcuin upon the future destinies of that England from which he was an exile; and which Alcuin looked upon as a land which was doomed to a long night of barbarity. For the Northmen had begun their devastations. The monastery of Lindisfarne was ravaged, and its monks slaughtered. From that time Alcuin had his home with the great Frank.

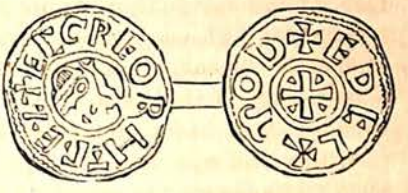
It is the year 800, and Charlemagne is about to be crowned at Rome as the Emperor of the West. There comes to his court a singular fugitive, Edburga, queen of Beortric, who had thrust Egbert from the throne of Wessex. The daughter of Offa is a murderess. She attempted to poison a friend of her husband; and both drank of the fatal cup, and died. The people have expelled her from the country. Charlemagne, according to a story which looks authentic, asks her if she will have him for a new husband, or have his son. She chose the younger; when the king replied that she should have neither, but if she had chosen him she might have married the

* Such is the name of Charlemagne's sword in the Romance writers.

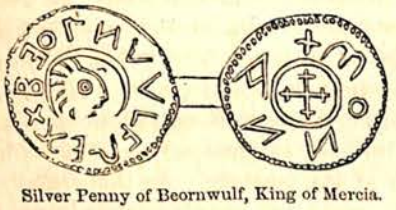
† See the Table of his expeditions in Guizot.

son. This, if true, was the royal banter towards a guilty woman, whose evil deeds ultimately sunk her into the lowest depths of wretchedness. But her guilt placed Egbert on the throne of Wessex. He returned to his country; and was at once chosen as the successor of Beortric. Charlemagne, it is said, gave him his own sword as a parting gift. But he had given him something better. He had shown him what a man of large capacity may do as an organiser of society. Egbert went forth from his foreign school; and, during his reign of thirty-six years, he accomplished that consolidation of authority which justified him in taking the title of King of England.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, under the year 800, has this record: "Ecgbryht succeeded to the kingdom of the West Saxons. And the same day Æthelmund ealdorman rode out from the Huiccii at Cynemæresford (Kempsford). Then Weostan the ealdorman with the men of Wiltshire met him. There was a great fight, and both the ealdormen were slain, and the men of Wiltshire got the victory." The Huiccii, or Wiccii, were men of Worcestershire and Warwickshire; and thus the accession of Egbert is signalised by a battle between people having the same origin, speaking the same language, separated only by a river. What was the work, then, which was before the new king to accomplish before the land could have rest and security? To put down these petty conflicts of tribes and chieftains, and reduce them to submission to one dominant power. It was a tedious and a fearful work. After a few years of repose the people of Cornwall and Wales were in commotion; as their brethren of Armorica were also revolting against Charlemagne. There was always this sympathy between the Britons on either side of the Channel. They were put down; and Cornwall was nominally united with Wessex, but remained free from Anglo-Saxon occupation for centuries, during which the people preserved their own language. In Mercia there was usurpation and anarchy. Egbert seized the opportunity, and asserted that supremacy which Wessex never lost. The battle of Ellendune (Wilton)—the great struggle between Egbert and Beornwulf—was fought in 823. Henry of Huntingdon, quoting, it is supposed, an old poem, says,—"Ellendune's stream was tinged with blood, and was choked with the slain, and became foul with the carnage." In 827, Northumbria had submitted to the king who had conquered the whole country south of the Humber.



Silver Penny of Egbert.



Silver Penny of Beornwulf, King of Mercia.

How rapidly England under one ruler might have repaired the never-ceasing warfare of three centuries was not yet to be manifested. There was an enemy coming upon the Anglo-Saxon power far more to be dreaded than the Welch or the Picts. It was that enemy that had even dared to pillage the coasts of France during the life of the great Charles; and that moved that stern conqueror to shed prophetic tears over the impending fate of his

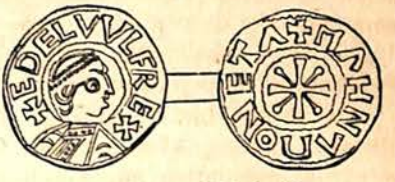
empire, when he saw the piratical flag in the Mediterranean. The enemy, whose race was destined to make two successive conquests of England, was the Dane, so called. He came at first for pillage to the estuaries and rivers of Gaul and Britain. In a few years he came to both countries for territory. Before the century was over, East Anglia and Northumbria were the prizes of the Northmen; and in a few years more they were finally established in that noble province of France to which they gave their name.

The Northmen were designated as Danes by the Anglo-Saxons, but they were not exclusively natives of Denmark. Their home was the sea. The ancient Scandinavia could never have been very fully peopled; and a thousand years ago the coasts only were populous. Malthus considers that the superfluity of inhabitants in the countries of the Baltic was a cause of their predatory expeditions and enforced settlements, which assumed so formidable a shape in the ninth century.* The law of primogeniture has been more satisfactorily assigned as a cause; for there was no want of soil on which an increasing population might subsist. "The eldest son of an aristocratic house inherited the family property. The younger ones were not indeed quartered on their own country, but were sent forth in ships, for the purpose of plundering the happier lands of the south. From these expeditions the idea first sprang of making permanent conquests, which ended in the establishment of Scandinavian dynasties in England." † The son of a king or chief, who had a maritime command, was termed a Viking; and thus we term generally those fierce captains, whose ravages afflicted our country, so exposed to their incursions. They came not, at first, in such swarms as could at once take possession of territory, and hold it. They came in numerous small vessels, in which they penetrated narrow rivers, and poured down upon defenceless villages and unprotected houses of religion. One of their heavy boats, by which they had reached Paris towards the end of the ninth century, was dug up in 1806 near the Champ-de-Mars, the keel hollowed out from a single piece of timber.‡ If there was obstruction in a river, the crews would drag their boats on shore, and carry them forward till they had passed the rocks or the shallows. They distracted and terrified the peaceful inhabitants by their combined attacks upon different points. Henry of Huntingdon has described their system with picturesque simplicity:—"It was wonderful how, when the English kings were hastening to encounter them in the eastern districts, before they could fall in with the enemy's bands, a hurried messenger would arrive and say, 'Sir King, whither are you marching? The heathens have disembarked from a countless fleet on the southern coast, and are ravaging the towns and villages, carrying fire and sword into every quarter.' The same day another messenger would come running, and say, 'Sir King, whither are you retreating? A formidable enemy has landed in the west of England, and if you do not quickly turn your face toward them, they will think you are fleeing, and follow in your rear with fire and sword.' Again, the same day, or on the morrow, another messenger would arrive, saying, 'What place, O noble chiefs, are you making for? The Danes have made a descent in the north; already they have burnt your mansions; even now

* Principle of Population, book i. chap. vi.
† Thorpe, note in Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 17.
‡ Palgrave, Normandy and England, vol. i. p. 615.

they are sweeping away your goods; they are tossing your young children raised on the points of their spears; your wives, some they have forcibly dishonoured, others they have carried off.'" * This is a vivid picture, scarcely over-coloured as to the cruel barbarism of these Northmen, and corresponding generally with what we learn from other sources. What these fierce assailants were doing on the Thames and the Parret, they were doing at the same period on the Seine and the Loire.

Egbert died in 837, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Ethelwulf. During the supremacy of Egbert there were still tributary kings; and, too often, the contests for a vacant throne left large provinces, such as Northumbria, more exposed than ever to the ravages of the Northmen. Ethelwulf deputed the governments of Kent, Essex, Surrey, and Sussex, to his son Æthelstan. This divided sovereignty was probably a fatal obstacle to unity of action in the defence of the country.



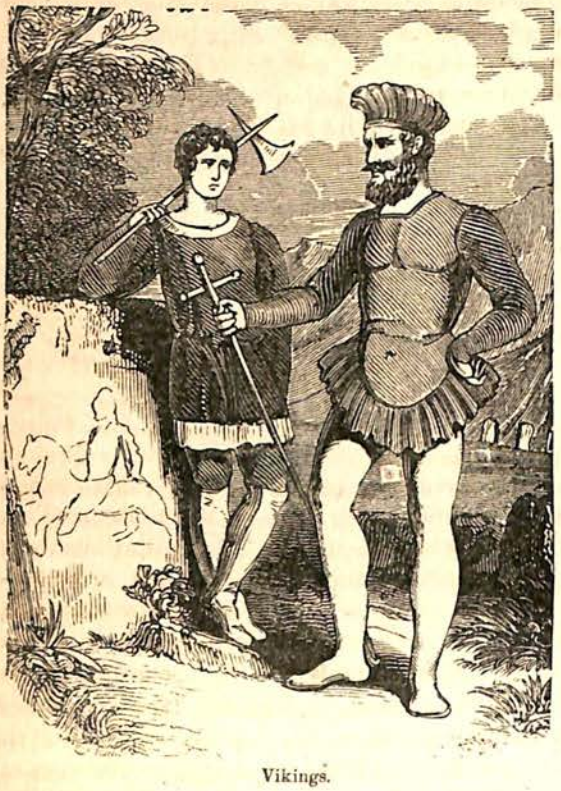
Silver Penny of Ethelwulf.

The same causes operated in France after the division of the empire on the death of Charlemagne. Sir Francis Palgrave has truly said of this portion of our history—which more or less applies to all our history—that "Anglo-Saxon history must be read in parallel with the history of France." † In the middle of the ninth century the terible Vikings ranged over the English Channel,—now landing in Devonshire to be defeated; now worsted in a sea-fight at Sandwich; now wintering in the Isle of Thanet, or, according to some chroniclers, in Sheppey. Then they arrive with a mighty fleet at the mouth of the Thames—plunder Canterbury; sail up to London; and, penetrating into Surrey, are defeated and driven back by Ethelwulf and his son Ethelbald. "The warriors fell on both sides, like corn in harvest." ‡ It was indifferent to these marauders on which side of the channel they carried forward their unceasing hostilities. Rouen they occupied, and re-occupied. In 845, after a winter of terrible severity, they entered Paris on a chilling Easter-eve, having everywhere left the traces of their ravages along the banks of the Seine, on whose eyots they raised gibbets, and whose overhanging trees bent beneath the load of stiffened victims. Their chief was Regner Lodbrok, whose later history is fatally connected with England. The inhabitants fled from Paris, resigning the city to the plunderers. Charles the Bald, by an enormous subsidy, bought off their retreat. Again and again they ravaged the countries which were bordered by the Seine and the Loire; and France appears to have had no rest from their attacks till they in some measure concentrated their forces upon a great attempt to possess themselves of all our island.

We are entering upon an epoch with the general outline of which every Englishman is supposed to be familiar,—that of Alfred. The great Saxon was born in 849. It might be supposed that in travelling over the recorded events from his birth to his death, in 901, there was no duty for the compiler

* Chronicle. Translated by Thomas Forester, preface to book v.
† Normandy and England, vol. i. p. 476.
‡ Henry of Huntingdon.

of a popular history but to take the leading facts narrated by more diffuse compilers, and to weave them into a plain and consistent story. The salient points might be thought sufficient to command attention, without any very minute investigation of authorities. Thus, following Hume, we might record that, at twelve years old, Alfred was "totally ignorant of the lowest elements of literature;" that "encouraged by the queen," (a convenient term for his mother or step-mother) he learned to read; that he soon became a diligent student, but, shaking off his literary indolence, devoted himself to the duties of a king; that he was driven from his throne, and became the servant of a neat-herd; went as a harper to the Danish camp; finally recovered his dominions; divided England into counties, hundreds, and tithings; made property so secure that he hung up golden bracelets in the highways, which no pilferer dared to touch; instituted trial by jury; and framed a code of laws, which are the foundation of our common law. Looking into the evidence of all these matters, and finding that many things are doubtful, and some untrue, how are we to tell the story of Alfred, when the sunlight of romance is no longer gleaming around it, and we have to sound our way amidst meagre annals and dim traditions? when his biography, attributed to Asser, is held to be written by a monk of the succeeding century, instead of by his own bosom friend? * when Alfred himself is proclaimed by some to be a mere creation of modern ignorance and bombast? There is quite enough remaining of the authentic and credible to make Alfred one of the most interesting and important persons in our country's history;—and we proceed.



Vikings.

King Ethelwulf had four sons and a daughter. His wife was Osburga, the daughter of Oslac, his cup-bearer. At a time when nobility was derived from personal service upon the king, the cup-bearer was amongst the most honoured of the royal officers. Osburga was of the race of Cerdic, from whom Ethelwulf himself derived his lineage. The eldest son, Ethelbald, was aiding his father in a great battle against the Danes in 850. The youngest, Alfred, was born the year before. The eldest had arrived at

* Wright's Biographia Britannica Literaria, p. 411.

manhood when the youngest was an infant in his father's halls at Wantage. The king, like the great body of the freemen, was a landowner. He had larger hereditary possessions than others; he was surrounded by wealthy and noble retainers; his life was put at a higher value than any other member of the community; he was the first in rank and in power; he presided over public deliberations; he was the chief magistrate: he was the head of the national levies, which he could call out for attack or defence. But the estates of others were independent of his control. He claimed no absolute lordship, as in the feudal system. He had tolls upon markets, and dues upon mines; he received voluntary gifts, and a portion of the fines levied upon offenders. But he seized upon no possessions of others; holding his own by inheritance or purchase. He disposed of his acquired property by will as any other owner, although certain estates always went with the crown. That property was scattered about the country. Alfred was born at the royal house at Wantage. Ethelswitha, his only sister, was married to the King of Mercia in another royal house at Chippenham. In these mansions there was no great pomp, and very little of what we call comfort. The king had a large body of thanes, his friends and servants—his defenders and ministers. They were the leaders in his wars—they were the comptrollers in his household. Great ecclesiastics, too, lived in fellowship with him, and assisted in his councils. The learning of the Church often gave an important direction to the rougher impulses of the Crown. But little of the regal splendour of feudality had yet arisen. The king wore his golden circlet; his nobles had their golden-hilted swords. There were banquets and there were processions. The king and his ealdormen sate upon the high seat, and the wine-cup was served; and the warriors and attendants stood around, and for them were the drinking-horns duly filled. But the slavish homage of the vassal to the suzerain belonged not to the personal independence of the Saxon times. We may imagine, then, the family arrangements amidst which the child Alfred was reared, as regards the kingly position of his father. Considerable doubt rests upon the narrative of Asser as to the nurture which he received from his mother. Asser records the public events of the kingdom up to the

Anglo-Saxon Ladies.

year 866, when Alfred was in his eighteenth year, and then proceeds thus:—"I think right in this place briefly to relate as much as has come to my knowledge about the character of my revered lord, Alfred, King of the Anglo-Saxons, during the years that he was an infant and a boy. He was loved by his father and mother, and even by all the people, above all his brothers, and was educated altogether at the court of the king. . . . . His noble nature implanted in him from his cradle a love of wisdom above all things; but, with shame be it spoken, by the unworthy neglect of his parents and nurses, he remained illiterate even till he was twelve years old, or more." * He listened, it is added, to the Saxon poems which he often heard recited, and easily retained them in his memory. He was a zealous practiser of hunting in all its varieties. At this age then, of twelve years, "his genius," according to Hume, "was first roused by the recital of Saxon poems, in which the queen took delight;" and "he soon learned to read those compositions, and proceeded thence to acquire the knowledge of the Latin tongue." This theory is built upon the charming story of Asser, that one day, when his mother was showing him and his brothers a volume of Saxon poems, with illuminated letters, she said, "whichever of you shall soonest learn this book, to him will I give it." The youngest of the three brothers—Ethelbert, Ethelred, and Alfred—made himself certain of the conditions. "Will you assuredly give that book to one of us,—will you give it to him who may first be able to understand and repeat it to you?" "Most certainly I will," said the mother, laughingly and joyfully. The boy "carried it to his teacher, and read it; and after he had read it, he brought it back to his mother and recited it." The story evidently belongs to a much earlier period of Alfred's life than that of his twelfth year. In his fourth or fifth year he is sent by his father to Rome. Two years after, Ethelwulf himself journeys to Rome; and, after a sojourn of twelve months, returns through France; and, staying

The Book of Songs.

* The words of Asser are, "illiteratus permansit." This certainly does not warrant Hume's interpretation, "totally ignorant of the lowest elements of literature," even if we accept Asser's "twelve years old" as correct.

awhile at the court of the French King, Charles the Bald, marries Judith, his daughter, and carries her to England as his lawful queen. Was Osburga, the mother of Alfred, dead? Was she divorced? Of her death, or of her divorce, the chroniclers make no mention. In two years after this French marriage Ethelwulf died. Judith, who was a child of thirteen when the old man married her, became the wife of his son Ethelbald. This marriage of his step-mother was against the canons of the Church; and Judith was sent back to her father. That she should have been the enthusiastic lover of Saxon poetry, who excited the emulation of Alfred and his elder brothers, is an absurdity. That Ethelwulf, who was in all things devoted to the maintenance of the authority of the Church, should have repudiated his wife without any express cause, and without ecclesiastical sanction, is most unlikely. The probability is, that Osburga died in Alfred's very early years; and that the story of the Saxon book of poems was a tradition, which showed the precocious talent of the child of four or five years old, and has nothing to do with the acquirements of the youth of twelve.

Alfred, we have mentioned, was sent to Rome in his fourth or fifth year. In 853, says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "King Ethelwulf sent his son Alfred to Rome." In 855, we find in the same record, "King Ethelwulf went to

The Coliseum, Rome.

Rome in great state, and dwelt there twelve months, and then returned homewards." His marriage, and his death about two years afterwards, are subsequently recorded. We have then, in one of the MSS. of this Chronicle, the following entry: "Alfred, his third [fourth] son, he had sent to Rome; and *when Pope Leo heard say that Ethelwulf was dead*, he consecrated Alfred king, and held him as his spiritual son at confirmation, even as his father Ethelwulf had requested on sending him thither." This remarkable passage appears to us to have been overlooked by our historians. The second journey to Rome of Alfred, with his father, is distinctly recorded by Asser, although the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle only mentions the first. But in neither authority is it recorded that Alfred returned with his father. Was Alfred, at five years

old, sent to Rome for his education? Did he remain at Rome till after the death of his father, and was he then consecrated king? Ethelwulf died in 858, when Alfred was nine years old.*

It is impossible to believe that a residence in Rome should have been without an enduring influence upon the mind of such a boy as Alfred. In the ninth century many of the glorious monuments of the republic and the empire had been preserved from time and the barbarian. The Coliseum had been plundered of its ornaments; but the majestic walls, though stripped of the metal clamps which bound each massy stone to the other, stood as if defying the petty spoliation. Bede has recorded the admiration with which the Saxon pilgrims regarded this mighty monument, when they exclaimed, "As long as the Coliseum stands, Rome shall stand; when the Coliseum falls, Rome will fall; when Rome falls, the world will fall."† The noble Pantheon was little injured. Baths, triumphal arches, columns, some little mutilated, some half-destroyed, would present themselves to the wonder of the young islander. In the splendid Basilicas, adapted to the uses of the Christian worship, would be seen the models of the cathedrals, however inferior their size and decorations, which had been erected in England. The pageantry of the sovereign pontiff, surrounded by bishops and abbots, and followed by crowds of pious supplicants, would be exhibited in many a long procession. The services of the altar would be conducted upon a scale of

magnificence, of which Alfred had seen no example in his father's cathedral at Winchester. Were these impressions to produce no effect, beyond that of passing wonder, on the mind of a youth with ardent curiosity and an insatiable desire of knowledge? Was there no one to associate in his rapid comprehension the memories of the past with his aspirations for the future?

* In Alexander Cooke's curious "Dialogue between a Protestant and a Papist" (1610), the Papist asserts that Alfred was educated at Rome; and is answered by the Protestant, contending that at twelve years old he could not read. See "Harleian Miscellany."

† See Gibbon, chap. lxxi. Byron has paraphrased this in "Childe Harold," canto iv.

It is said that the famous bishop Swithin accompanied the boy to Rome. It is known that Ethelwulf rebuilt at Rome the Saxon school which had been destroyed by fire. That school was especially set apart for the liberal education of the priests and nobles of England who sought instruction in the great metropolis of Christendom. Is it unlikely that the son of Ethelwulf should himself have derived advantage from his father's munificence?

Ethelbald, the eldest brother of Alfred, had met Ethelwulf with unfilial hostility when he returned from France with his young wife; and before Ethelwulf's death this son had, by a compulsory partition, attained the dominion of Wessex. The father bequeathed Kent and his other dominions to his second son Ethelbert. After the death of Ethelbald, if he were childless, the succession of Wessex was left to Ethelred, the third son, and to Alfred. In little more than two years after the decease of his father, king Ethelbald dies. Alfred is now twelve years old. The two younger brothers assert no claim to the separate sovereignty, and Ethelbert of Kent is king also of the other dominions. There is no doubt that Alfred lived with his reigning brother, as documents exist bearing both their signatures. He, as well as Ethelred, had given up the patrimonial inheritance to him who was to maintain the dignity of the family and the safety of the kingdom. The Danes were again in fierce activity. They landed at Southampton, and plundered Winchester. They landed in Thanet, and kept Kent in terror by their predatory incursions. The inland counties were the safest; and we may contemplate Alfred dwelling in his birthplace. From the accession of Ethelbert in 860, to his death in 866, Alfred is without responsibility, except that of self-improvement. He is of weak health; but he leads no sedentary life. Asser distinguishes between "manly arts, such as hunting," and "liberal arts." Alfred saw that, however excellent were books, there were other means of education; and thus he became, not only the great warrior and statesman, but the most practical improver of the people, elevating their knowledge and exciting their industry. He taught workers of gold and other artificers how best to labour in their crafts. He instructed his falconers, hawkers, and dog-keepers. He built houses, majestic and good beyond all the precedents of his ancestors, by his new mechanical inventions. Thus Asser describes his later life. But he must have learned these things experimentally, before he could have been a teacher. Let us endeavour to trace what would have been his industrial and social experience in the royal home of Wantage.

Royal Costume.

That district of remarkable fertility, now known as the Vale of White

Horse, was favourably situated as a regal possession. Its rich arable land would yield wheat and barley, while the verdant slopes of the chalk hills would maintain numerous flocks and herds. The surrounding woods would give food to abundance of swine, and supply the indispensable necessary of fuel. All around would be ample forests and unenclosed commons, well fitted for the chase. The Thames, at no great distance, would furnish a highway for the conveyance of merchandise from the towns upon its banks. But upon the royal estate would be produced nearly all that would be required for the support of the household. The principal dwelling would have few of the attributes of palatial splendour. A series of low buildings, with addition after addition, according to the wants of the family, it would claim no admiration for its grand or beautiful features. No well-tended lawns or picturesque trees would give to its surrounding pastures the character of the garden. A rough utility would preside over every arrangement. The stall-fed cattle would be in close vicinity to the dwelling. The dogs and the hawks would have their kennel and their mews not far removed from the ladies' bower-chambers and the priests' chapel. The grinding-slaves at their hand-mills would be in close attendance upon the bakery; and the fragrant wort of the brewery would mingle its steams with the thin smoke of the wood-fire in the hall. In various adjoining buildings would live the agricultural and handicraft serfs—the ploughmen, the woodmen, the herdsmen, the shepherds. There would be the forge of the smith, and the bench of the carpenter, close at hand. The women would ply the spindle, and the weaver throw his shuttle, to produce the coarse garments of the household. Adjoining lands would be leased out upon a tenure of dues or service. Rents would come in, but in the primitive shape of flitches of bacon, geese, hens, cheese, eggs, honey, and ambers of ale. Hedging and ditching, ploughing and shearing, fishing and road-making, would be done for service.* Every large household, whether of the king or the ealdorman, had thus, in a greater or less degree, an independent existence. The land was the great source of wealth. A few articles of necessity, such as salt, had in many instances to be obtained by exchange. The cups of silver and gold, the furs and the silks of kingly houses, were, in most cases, presents. The life even of the highest was simple, and not without cares and labour. But it called forth many exercises of ingenuity which are not thought of in states of society where every want is commercially supplied, where there are abundant stores, and ready communication. It was a life of earnest work, and therefore not unfavourable to mental activity. It was under its healthful influences that Alfred educated himself for the higher duties of the defender and the teacher of his people.

Alfred, the king, before he came to the throne, had made himself well acquainted with the condition of the population over which he was to rule. His translation of Boetius, "from Latin to the English phrase," has many original passages introduced, which are incidental illustrations of the state of society. For example: he says, "These are the materials of a king's work, and his tools to govern with; that he have his land fully peopled; that he should have prayer-men, and army-men, and workmen." The peopling of the land was derived from a systematic occupation, and not a chance establish-

* See Kemble's "Saxons in England," book i. chap. xi.

ment of large migratory bands. The hide of land was the estate of one family. There are calculations in Bede's Ecclesiastical History, and in later authorities, as to the number of hides in particular places, such as the Isle of Thanet, and the Isle of Wight; and, making due allowance for waste land, common land, and woods, it is supposed that the hide of arable was from thirty to forty acres. As families multiplied, generation after generation, the enclosed land gradually extended on every side; so that we may understand the meaning of a passage which immediately follows Alfred's description of "the materials of a king's work." He says, "These are also his materials, that with these tools he should have provision for these three classes; and their provision then is, land to inhabit, and gifts, and weapons, and meat, and ale, and clothes, and what else that these three classes need." The great point of contest between the British races and the Saxon settlers was "the land to inhabit;" and so, we may assume, was the contest, after the first settlements, between neighbouring tribes—between Mercians and West-Saxons, East Anglians and Northumbrians. Out of this "land to inhabit" were to come the supplies for these various classes—gifts for the prayer-men; weapons for the army-men; meat, and ale, and clothes for all. With regard to the prayer-men, there were not only the monastic establishments, and parish churches in great number, but resident priests in the houses of the rich and powerful. The prayer-men undoubtedly formed a very large body; and by their influence in the transition-period through which England had passed from heathendom to Christianity—and was still passing, with heathendom assaulting the country in its most ferocious attributes—their services were as essential to the welfare and preservation of the State as those of the army-men. Yet they had deteriorated as scholars, when compared with their predecessors of the seventh and eighth centuries, when the cloisters of England sent forth the best teachers of the schools of continental Europe. And yet, though their learning was not conspicuous in the time of Alfred, their continued practice of the civilising arts preserved the land, during its intestine struggles, in a condition far removed from barbarism. The Church kept the island in a connexion with the European community under the Roman ecclesiastical authority; and thus prevented it halting while other countries were progressing. In their own localities the clergy were necessarily advancing the great arts of life. They kept alive the emulation of the cultivators. They had the trimmest gardens and the most productive orchards. Their ponds were stored with the choicest fish. They practised the healing arts before medicine and surgery were professions. They were the transcribers of books. Their breviaries and chronicles were adorned with pictorial representations, more powerful often than words. They were musicians. They were architects. When Alfred therefore said that when he ascended the throne there were very few on his side the Humber who could understand their daily prayers in English, or translate any writing from the Latin, he meant to describe that sleep of the soul which belongs to all functionaries who cleave to the letter and not to the spirit of their duties. They mumbled their mass-books, as some of their successors continued to mumble them for centuries. The Latin words passed from their lips, but they could not interpret the sense of other Latin. Above all, they could not adapt knowledge to popular instruction in "the English phrase." There were schoolmasters

amongst us, at a time not very distant, when such ignorance and such indifference to the wants of the many were not uncommon. The elevation of the great body of the people is the best corrective of the ignorance of classes; and Alfred, in his later life, laboured to accomplish this in his limited field of utility. His acute perception of the wants of the people led him to express himself strongly as to the deficiencies of the churchmen.

The army-men, who were to be provided with weapons, were the *posse-comitatus*—the national levies, headed by the king, his ealdormen, and his inferior nobles. The freemen constituted the armed force of the shire, and the ealdorman of the shire was their chief. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle we constantly read of the ealdorman winning or losing a battle, of the ealdorman being slain, of the king and the ealdorman engaged together in warfare. The divisions of the country into shires, hundreds, tithings, made the calling out of these levies a matter of well-ordered arrangement. During a period of alarm, such as that upon which we are entering, every town and village must have had its band of army-men organised and disciplined, ready to follow the summons of their legal chief. The burghers were associated in their guilds, under their portreeve or their bishop. The villagers joined hide to hide, and tithing to tithing, for common defence. How they fought, this sturdy Anglo-Saxon race, needs no eulogy—"Our blood is fet from fathers of war-proof."

Let us glance at the third class of tools that a king must govern with—the workmen. Unhappily, the greater number of them are serfs; but the king knows full well that they must have due provision for their physical wants—meat, and ale, and clothes, and what else is needful. In the cold and uncertain climate of our island the workman will not subsist upon a dish of lentils; or bask, half-naked, under a bright sun. If he works diligently he must be well fed, clothed, and housed. The agricultural labourers are the first to be considered. The ordinary operations of husbandry have varied little in principle during a thousand years. There are some dialogues for popular instruction, written in the tenth century, which quaintly describe many of the industrial occupations, and which, although often quoted, must be slightly noticed here.* In these dialogues, composed by Alfric of Canterbury, the ploughman says,—"I labour much. I go out at daybreak, urging the oxen to the field, and I yoke them to the plough." He sees the shear and the coulter fastened; he has a boy to impel them with a goad; and the poor lad is hoarse with cold and bawling. The ploughman further says, "I am bound to plough every day a full acre or more." The herdsman says,—"When the ploughman separates the oxen, I lead them to the meadows; and all night I stand watching over them on account of thieves; and again, in the morning, I take them to the plough well-fed and watered." In the old series of

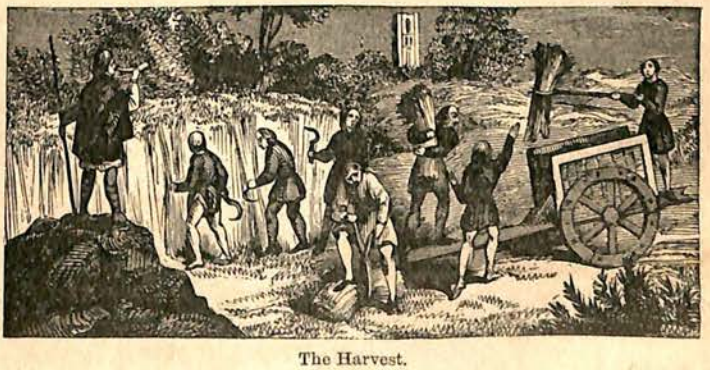
The Ploughmen and the Sower.

* See Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii.

illuminations to illustrate the Saxon Calendar, which Mr. Strutt first engraved,* the sower closely follows at the heels of the ploughman. In another illumination the gardeners are lopping their fruit-trees and pruning their vines. October was the wyn-monat, or wine-month; and ancient

drawings give us the wine-press and the vine-picker. Of the cultivation of the vine in England there can be no doubt, however partial was the growth as to more or less favoured localities. Bede says that the island "produces

vines in some places." The religious houses undoubtedly had vineyards. Camden imputes the non-cultivation of the grape for wine to the sloth of the people in his more modern times. Commerce, which gives us what



The Harvest.

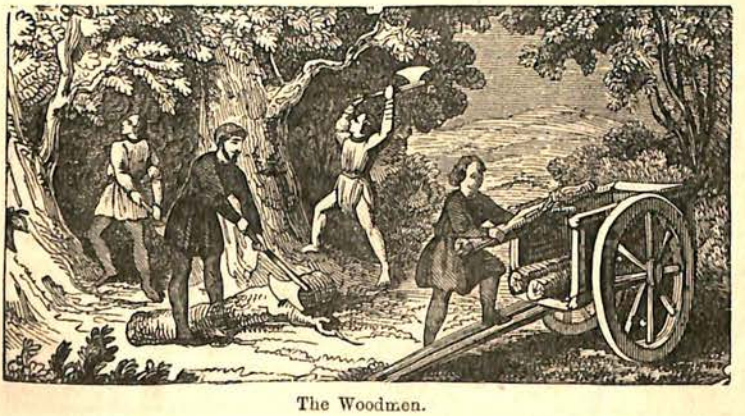
other lands can produce better than our own, drove out the native cultivation of what was truly unfitted for our climate, if we regard the essential condition of quality. In other rude drawings we have the labourer in the

* "Manners, Customs, &c., of the Inhabitants of England," vol. i. The wood-cuts of the text are taken from these authorities with necessary alterations of the rude drawings.

hay-harvest, with the scythe and the rake. Others exhibit the various operations of the corn-harvest—the reaping, the sheafing, the carrying. The shepherd, in the old colloquy, describes his duties :—" In the first part of the morning I drive my sheep to their pasture, and stand over them in heat and cold with my dogs, lest the wolves destroy them. I lead them back to their folds, and milk them twice a day; and I move their folds, and make cheese and butter, and am

The Shepherd.

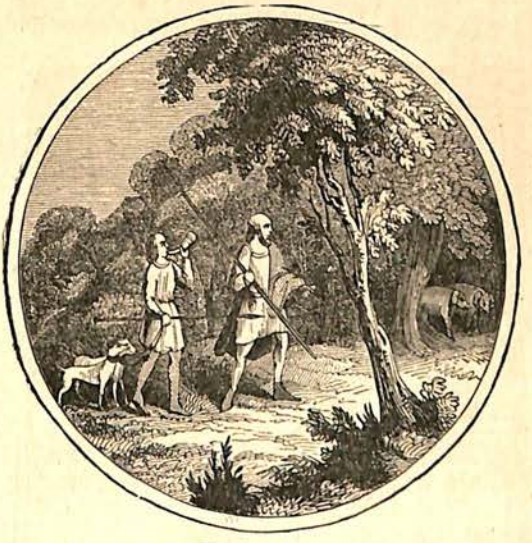
faithful to my lord." The dense woods which surrounded every seat of the cultivators, forming an original boundary of peculiar sanctity, and latterly a safeguard against marauders, were filled with swine. They fed in common, as in the New Forest within our own times, though they were individual property. There, too, ranged the wild boar, sometimes startling the woodmen



The Woodmen.

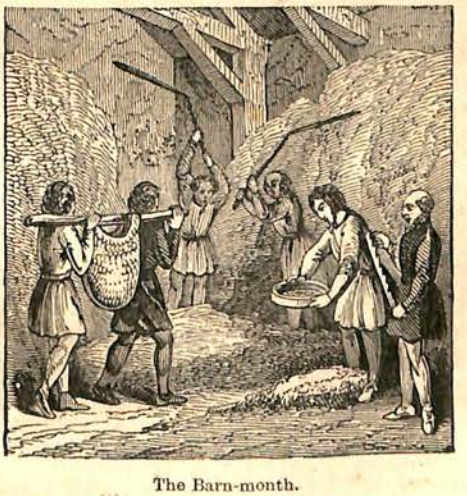
as they bore home the winter fuel in the loaded wain; and now pursued by the hunter, with his bold dogs and his trusty spear. The festivities of the holy month of December were gladdened by the presence of the boar's head. It told of bold adventures akin to warfare—of youths trained up to hardihood and defiance of danger. At that season the noise of the flail was heard in the barn; and the wheat and the barley were stored in the granary. Those

who had abundance feasted in their halls; but the poor were not wholly disregarded. There was a fund for the poor which was a part of the tithe of the church; there were altar oblations. The Saxon law for the poor was strictly a law of settlement; and as the serf was compelled to remain in one



The Boar-hunt.

place and one service, his lord was also obliged to provide for him. But there were miserable wanderers who had no legal provision, who must have depended upon private benevolence. In some years, too, a bad season



The Barn-month.

produced general or local distress; and the natural laws which regulated price were inoperative in a country of limited communication. Then the Lord and the Lady distributed alms at the hall-door. Etymologists have disputed whether these titles were derived from the Saxon words which mean loaf-giver. One old illumination, which is copied in the following page,

shows us a royal or noble house, with its attendant warriors, its priests, and its chapel, with the poor receiving food from the heads of the household. It is a rude work, but its authenticity is undoubted.

Such were some of the influences of a rural life amidst which Alfred was reared. They brought him into connexion with the people; and thus fitted him for the duties of government. Rulers who live apart from the people must, naturally, be self-seekers. He was not one of those who live for themselves alone.

ALFRED

Danish Ships.

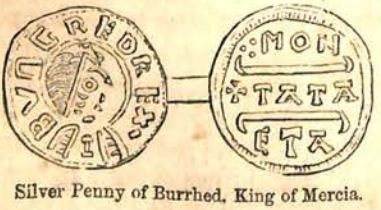
CHAPTER VII.

Regner Lodbrok—Ethelred and Alfred—Danes invade Mercia—Ravages in the Fen Countries—Edmund of East Anglia—Danes in Wessex—Battle of Æscesdun—Alfred the King—Danes in Northumbria—Imputed faults of Alfred—The flight to Athelney—Legends and Traditions.

HE Dane who sailed up the Seine in 845, and carried desolation into Paris on that fatal Easter-eve, when the churches were forsaken, and the citizens fled, was named Regner Lodbrok. Of his historical existence there can be but little doubt; but some of the wild stories that are associated with his name appear to belong to the doubtful legends of the north. According to these, after ravaging Scotland and Ireland, he embarked in two vessels of more than ordinary size, and being unequal to their management was wrecked on the coast of Northumbria. Advancing into the country, he was surrounded and overpowered, and was cast into a dungeon amidst venomous snakes. His death-song is one of the most striking pieces of Scandinavian poetry—an ancient relic, full of images of ferocity exulting in some terrible carnage, when "many fell into the jaws of the wolf, and the hawk plucked the flesh from the wild beasts." In this last hour, the sea-king looks gladly to his immortal feasts, "in the seats of Baldor's father," where "we shall drink ale continually from the large

hollowed skulls." * To revenge his death, the sons of Regner Lodbrok came in great power to England. There is a seeming inconsistency in the story, which is attempted to be reconciled by another legend which accounts for their landing in East Anglia, in 866. But as it appears, from our own chronicles, that they only wintered there, and proceeded into Northumbria the next year, we may accept the legend that the sons of the great pirate did carry their avenging arms into the northern parts of England, where, for a century, there had been perpetual anarchy.

At this time of peril Ethelbert died. During the eight years which had elapsed since the death of Ethelwulf, two of Alfred's brothers had reigned. Upon the two younger sons now rested the destinies of England. Ethelred succeeded to the crown of the united kingdoms of Wessex and Kent. Alfred appears to have had a responsible position. He is called "Secundarius." Some conjecture that he ruled over a small district; others that he had a joint authority with his brother. Asser says that Alfred, if he had so chosen, might have been king, whilst his brother Ethelred was alive. The strict hereditary succession to the crown was not always regarded; and as the witena-gemot had certainly some power of election, the qualities which Alfred displayed, even at that early age, might have commanded the admiration of the various representatives of public opinion. For the witena-gemot was a representative body, having a consultative voice with the king in great public questions, such as peace or war,—making new laws or confirming old,—levying taxes,—raising armaments,—and deciding, in many cases, upon ecclesiastical matters. They had, in these and other affairs, a concurrent authority with the king, as a deliberative body. Alfred, then,—the young man who was "secundarius" to Ethelred,—might have reigned in his stead had he been so minded. He was not so minded. It was not, "because," as Asser writes, "he much excelled all his brothers both in wisdom and all good qualities, and moreover because he was warlike to excess" (*nimium bellicosus*), that he was to risk any distraction of the country at a time of great danger from without, and great suffering within. The year 868 was a year of famine. A failure of the bounty of heaven in a settled country, where the larger abundance of one district equalises the scantier production of another district, is a great misfortune. But in England, at the time when Ethelred was king, where predatory armies were ravaging the north, and hostile fleets throwing their swarms of new plunderers on the east, a dearth in the south and west would bring even more than common misery. The next year saw the same infliction, and with the famine came starvation's sister, pestilence. Alfred is now married. It was an early age for marriage, and a strange time for marrying. His wife was Elswitha, the daughter of a famous ealdorman of Lincolnshire; and through her mother, who afterwards lived in Alfred's home, she was descended from the royal house of Mercia. Alfred's sister had been married fifteen years before, to Burrhed, king of Mercia. There was thus intimate union between the two states in their family alliances. Asser relates a



Silver Penny of Burrhed, King of Mercia.

* See Turner, book iv. chap. iii.

remarkable incident that occurred at the period when the nuptials of Alfred and Elswitha were celebrated in Mercia, "among innumerable multitudes of people of both sexes, and after continual feasts, both by night and by day." He says that Alfred "was immediately seized, in presence of all the people, by sudden and overwhelming pain." The biographer adds, "He had this sort of disease from his childhood," and then relates how it formerly passed away, at Alfred's earnest prayers; and, returning to him at these hours of gladness, continued to his forty-fourth year. The narrative of Asser, as to this sudden infliction, is extremely confused; and does not occur in the proper chronological order. Of these bodily sufferings of Alfred, some of the chroniclers make no mention; but Asser, in another place, says, "when he was more advanced in life, he was harassed by many diseases unknown to all the physicians of the island." Having regard to the early deaths of all his brothers, we may be warranted in believing that the sons of Ethelwulf were constitutionally of weak health. The extraordinary energy in war, in council, in study, of the youngest and most illustrious of this family, is not inconsistent with his long-continued struggles against an hereditary infirmity. It was the unconquerable will that supported, in the discharge of duty, the Saxon Alfred, as it supported the Dutch William, through many years of pain and anxiety.

The dangers that surrounded the island, generally, were coming close to Alfred, in those days of early domesticity, when he had brought a wife to share his narrow fortunes, and his doubtful prospects. For Alfred was poor. We learn distinctly from his will, that his brother, the king, had not given him a due share of the paternal estates. There is an emphatic passage in his translation of Boetius, which is not found in the original Latin, in which he speaks of a loving wife: "She has enough of every good in this present life, but she has despised it all for thee alone. She has shunned it all, because only she has not thee also."* This sounds like a personal retrospect of the support which he had received in the affection of his queen, during his wanderings and turmoils. They were about to begin. In 868 the Danes, who had established themselves at York, crossed the Humber, for the invasion of Mercia. They possessed themselves of Nottingham, where they wintered. The Mercian king immediately sent for succour to his brothers-in-law of Wessex; and Ethelred and Alfred marched to his assistance. They besieged "the house of caves," as Nottingham was called, and compelled the enemy to quit its occupation, and return to Northumbria. Henry of Huntingdon says, that "Hinguar," (Ivar, or Ingvar, who, with his brother Ubba, are now first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon annals,) "seeing that the whole force of the English was assembled, and that his army was besieged and of inferior strength, had recourse to smooth words, and with dangerous cunning obtained terms of peace from the English." But there was no safety for southern England while the invader was secure in the north. There was rest for a year; and then the devastating power of the Dane rolled onward like a vast engulphing sea that no barrier could shut out.

In 870, the Danes again crossed the Humber. "The army," says the

* Turner, Anglo-Saxons, book v., chap. ii. Mr. Turner has given a great interest to Alfred's Boetius (of which we shall have to speak), by pointing out the passages which are the translator's expansion of the original idea.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "rode across Mercia into East-Anglia, and took up their winter-quarters at Thetford." By the term "the army"—"the heathen army"—the Anglo-Saxon records now begin to distinguish the invaders. They were no longer mere predatory "crews;"—they were "the army"—wintering in one place; garrisoning another; coming, again and again, in larger numbers from the icy capes of the Baltic; occupying the small islands that cluster round Britain; and planting at length a firm foot upon a territory far more valuable than the Orkneys and the Hebrides. They "rode across Mercia." It was a terrible ride for the scattered cultivators and the solitary monasteries of the fen countries. The history attributed to Ingulphus, the Abbot of Croyland, details, from the traditionary relations of an eye-witness, the course of this devastating march through Lincolnshire to Norfolk. But we are warned by a very competent critic against putting too much credence in this authority. Dr. Henry had thus written: "Ingulphus published an excellent history of the abbey of Croyland, from its foundation, A.D. 664 to A.D. 1091, with which he had introduced much of the general history of the kingdom, with a variety of curious anecdotes that are no where else to be found." Sir Francis Palgrave says, "It is exactly these curious anecdotes which must be unsparingly rejected." * May not this historical scepticism be carried too far? There are many anachronisms in the book of Ingulphus; it may have been written at a later period than the beginning of the twelfth century, when Ingulphus died. But there is little of extravagance in the narrative; and it has the great charm of local colouring. The Danes cross the Witham, and enter the district of Kesteven. Out of the district called Holland come forth the marshmen, under the leading of Earl Algar. The moist soil shakes beneath the tramplings of gathering bands, pouring out from Deeping, Langtoft, and Boston. The lord of Brunne comes with his followers. Tolius, the monk of Croyland, throws off the cowl, and, at the head of a body of fugitives who had rallied round him, joins the united forces. They attack the Northmen in their advance, and drive them back to their earth-works. The alarm goes forth; and the ravagers from other parts hasten to the rescue. Many of the Mercians fly from the terror of their increasing enemies. But Algar, the earl of Holland, and Morcard, the lord of Brunne, and Osgot, the sheriff of Lincolnshire, and Tolius, the soldier-monk, and Harding of Rehale, stand firm, through an autumn day of attack and repulse. In the evening the Northmen make a feint of withdrawing from the field. The English rush forward to the pursuit. The Danes rally; and a noon of sagacious resistance is ended in a night of carnage, in which all the patriotic chieftains perish. A few of their followers escape to Croyland. The abbot and his monks are performing matins, when the terror-stricken fugitives tell of the approaching destruction. Some of the timid prayer-men take boat, and leave their fertile gardens, and their sunny orchards, where the vines and the apple-trees luxuriated amidst a waste of waters,—to hide themselves in the marshes. The bold and the aged who remain at their altars fall in one general slaughter. A little boy only is spared to be led away by Sidroc, one of the Danish chiefs, when they marched forward, and left Croyland in flames. Onward they march, by the ancient roads which cross this land of fens, to Peterborough. The abbot of this great monastery, famous for its architec-

* "Quarterly Review," vol. xxxiv., p. 296.

tural beauty, and whose library was rich with the collected manuscripts of two centuries, resisted the assailants. His courage was unavailing. All perished; and a pile of smouldering ruins alone remained, where the piety of many generations had heaped up precious relics and costly shrines, and where the transcriber and illuminator had been working at illustrated chronicles which have now perished. The boy of Croyland escaped from his captivity. Wandering amidst pathless marshes, hiding amidst reeds and bulrushes, he went on his perilous way to Croyland, and told his dismal experience to the few fugitives who had returned to behold the devastation of their pleasant seats: and from this boy, whose name was Thurgar, the narrative of Ingulphus was stated to be derived. Onward went the Northmen. The abbey of Ely was ravaged, as Peterborough and Croyland had been, and all its inmates were murdered. These Danes had left fearful traces of their course, as "they rode across Mercia," before they "took up their winter-quarters at Thetford."

They are now in East Anglia. Edmund, the king, obtained the crown of that separate province, in 855. He has held his rule in peace till this fatal invasion, which is destined to end the dominion of the Anglo-Saxon race in that part of the island. In a battle with Ingvar, the most cruel of the Danish chiefs, Edmund is taken prisoner. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says, "The same winter, King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes got the victory, and slew the king, and subdued all the land, and destroyed all the minsters which they came to. The names of their chiefs who slew the king were Ingwair and Ubba." In the next century Dunstan is affirmed to have related the piteous story of Edmund's death, as he heard it, in his youth, from an ancient warrior, who had been the sword-bearer of the king. The Danes sent their messengers to Edmund, who was dwelling at Hagilsdun (now Hoxne, near Diss), upon the river Waveney, to demand that he should abjure his religion, divide his treasures, and reign under their supremacy. The proposal was rejected; and the king disdained to fly. Resistance was now vain. He was bound to a tree; scourged with whips; pierced with arrows, and finally beheaded. The constancy and sufferings of the East Anglian king raised him to a place in the martyrology. Saint Edmundsbury became one of the richest endowed monasteries in the kingdom. The monastic legends connected with Saint Edmund furnish a proof of the veneration in which his memory was held by the Anglo-Saxon people, when East Anglia had become a Danish province. For nearly a century and a half the remains of the murdered prince were carefully preserved at Beodrechesworth (St. Edmund's Bury); were then removed for a short time to London; and were finally brought back to the great abbey to receive a veneration which was maintained for centuries in credulity, though commenced in patriotism. The little wooden church at Greensted, in Essex, in which tradition says that the body of the royal martyr rested in its way from London to Suffolk, is still an object of national interest. The purity of his life, and the heroism of his death, commanded the sympathy of a long suffering people, and justify the reverence for the man which we yield not to the saint, when we read the story of the last of the East Anglians.

The great danger of England is drawing closer and closer round the rulers

and the people of Wessex. Northumbria is in the power of the invaders. Guthrum, the Dane, rules over East Anglia: Mercia is weak and irresolute. "This year," 871, says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "the army came to Reading, in Wessex; and three days after this, two of their earls rode forth. Then Ethelwulf, the ealdorman, met them at Englefield, and there fought

Ancient Church, Greensted.

against them, and got the victory; and there one of them, whose name was Sidroc, was slain. About three days after this, King Ethelred and Alfred his brother led a large force to Reading, and fought against the army, and there was great slaughter made on either hand." The Northmen, with superior strategy, had thrown up an entrenchment between the Thames and the Kennet, and their superiority of position compelled the Saxons to retreat. "Ethelwulf, the ealdorman, was slain, and the Danish men had possession of the place of carnage." But the retreat was not a flight. "And about four days after this, King Ethelred and Alfred his brother fought against the whole army at Æscesdun." It is now, for the first time, that we distinctly see the man Alfred, in his character of a great military leader. He is twenty-two years of age. The story of this battle is told with some minuteness by William of Malmesbury, and with more detail by Asser. It was the turning-point of Alfred's life. The locality of Æscesdun—the ash-tree hill—has not been satisfactorily determined. Aston, a village near Wallingford, and Ashampstead, also in Berkshire, at a mid distance between Wallingford, Newbury, and Reading, have each been contended for. The chalk-hills about Wantage have been associated with this memorable battle; and the White Horse of the Saxon race has been held to be a monument of the Saxon victory. Asser says, "The field of battle was not equally advantageous to both parties. The Pagans occupied the higher ground, and the Christians came up from below. There was also a single thorn-tree, of stunted growth, which we

have seen with our own eyes.* Around this tree the opposing armies came together, with loud shouts from all sides." The Danish army was divided into two bodies; the one commanded by two kings, whose names are recorded as Bagseg and Healfdene, the other by many earls. The Pagans came on rapidly to fight. Asser says, "Alfred, as we have been told by those who were present, and would not tell an untruth, marched up promptly with his men to give them battle; for King Ethelred remained a long time in his tent in prayer, hearing the mass, and said he would not leave it till the priest had done, or abandon the divine protection for that of men." The younger brother rushed on alone,—he rushed on, like a boar of the woods (*aprino more*). William of Malmesbury says, "The piety of the king was of infinite advantage to his brother, who was too impetuous." Asser, as became his vocation, also attributes the victorious issue of the terrible conflict to the prayers of Ethelred. Alfred was habitually religious. He who in his youth

prostrated himself before an altar, and, having earnestly prayed that his bodily sufferings might be assuaged, had the holy conviction that his prayers had been heard,—he was not likely to have forgotten the God of battles in this great extremity. But his present business was to fight; to be foremost in the tumult and the clashing of spears; to strike terror by his boldness. His "book of devotion is in his bosom, to assist his prayers;" † but in this hour of conflict

* "Quam nos ipsi nostris propriis oculis vidimus." In Dr. Giles' edition this is translated, "but we have ourselves never seen it." An accurate translation of Asser is much wanted.

† Asser.

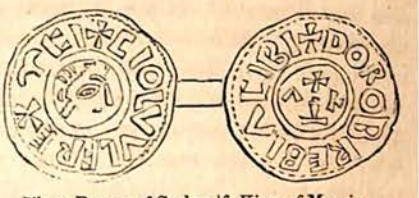
it is no want of godliness to trust to the sword in his hand. To him, as to all those who have swayed the world, whether by arms or by policy, belonged this great attribute of boldness. Rashness is as ready to retreat as to rush on. Boldness is persevering. Malmesbury, describing Alfred at a later period of his life, says, "The king himself was, with his usual activity, present in every action, ever daunting the invaders, and inspiriting his subjects, with the signal display of his courage. He would oppose himself singly to the enemy, and by his own personal exertions rally his declining forces. The very places are yet pointed out by the inhabitants where he felt the vicissitudes of good and evil fortune. It was necessary to contend with Alfred even after he was overcome." We believe the whole history of this remarkable man may be associated with these two leading characteristics of his mind, his boldness and his perseverance. The passionate onslaught of the young Saxon in his first great battle a thousand years ago ought not to be forgotten by his descendants, who, during the eventful annals of their country, have never yet escaped danger except by fronting it. The danger of that conflict round the hill of ash-trees was escaped; and the banner of the White Horse floated triumphantly over the Danish raven.

But though signally defeated in the greatest battle that the Northmen had fought on the English soil, they would shrink from no contest as long as the fertile lands of the west and the south were to be won. They came, with great reinforcements, from their native seas. They fought with Ethelred and Alfred at Basing, and were not driven back. In two months after, they fought at Merton; and the Saxon brothers were victorious during a great part of the day, and there was great slaughter on either hand; but, adds the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, "the Danes had possession of the place of carnage." At Easter, after this battle, King Ethelred died, "worn down with numberless labours," as Malmesbury records. Others say that he received a fatal wound in the battle of Merton.

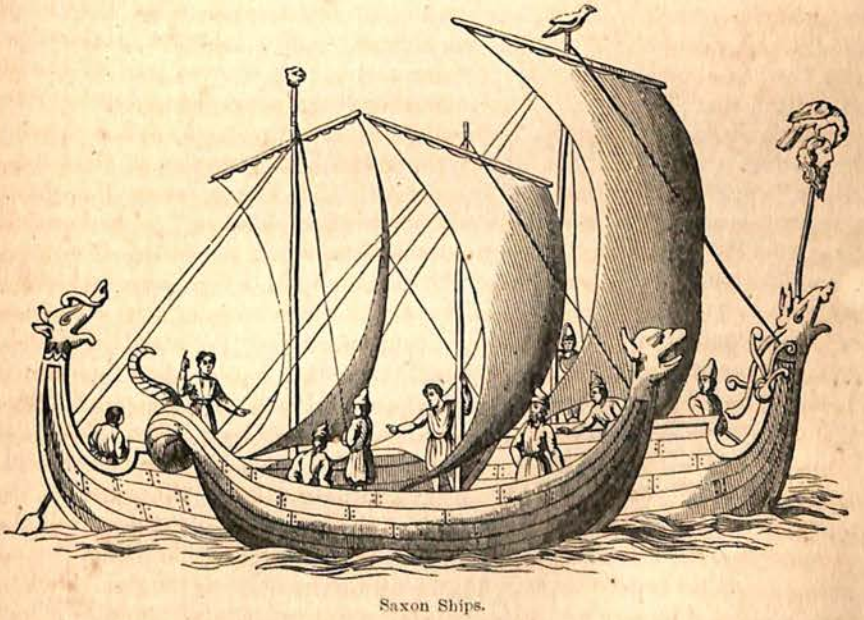
Coin of Alfred.

Alfred is king. When he was anointed at Rome, a mere boy, he had four brothers. They have each worn the crown of Wessex in due succession. They are gone, as the homely old chroniclers write, "the way of all flesh." Ethelred has left two infant sons; but this is not a time when the ordinary laws of lineal succession can be regarded, even if the Saxon principle of election had ceased to be in force. Asser writes,—"In the same year (871), the aforesaid Alfred, who, hitherto, during the life of his brother, had held a secondary place, immediately upon Ethelred's death, by the grace of God, assumed the government of the whole realm, with the greatest good-will of all the inhabitants of the kingdom." There is a theory that in the earlier part of his reign he lost "this good-will of all the inhabitants of the kingdom." Asser says that he accepted the crown almost against his wish; that he doubted whether he should be so supported by the divine assistance, as to be able to resist the enemies that were gathering around them. From his brother's grave at Wimborne, in Dorsetshire, he marched to attack the Danes at Wilton. He was defeated. In one year nine battles had been fought, and the Saxons were reduced to a small band. The invaders agreed to quit

Wessex, upon the payment of a tribute. The next year Mercia submitted to the same humiliating conditions. No submission could save Mercia and its unhappy king. The Danes again ravaged the country, and the brother-in-law of Alfred fled from the shores of England to die a pilgrim in Rome. Alfred's sister survived, and probably found an asylum with her brother. The throne of Mercia was then filled by Ceolwulf, "an unwise king," as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle calls him, who was a traitor to his country. He was soon dethroned by those to whom he had become a tributary. In Northumbria, the Danes became established settlers, "and that year (876) Healfdene apportioned the lands of Northumbria, and they thenceforward continued ploughing and tilling them." This record of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is highly important, as showing the process that was going on in the subdued districts, of peaceful cultivation instead of lawless plunder. Proceeding from the same original stock, the Dane and the Saxon, having no great dissimilarity of language or manners, would gradually intermix, especially when the heathen obstinacy had ultimately yielded to the general progress of Christianity on the European continent. But the ambition of the Northmen was still unsated: they aimed at the subjection of all England. As Rollo overran Normandy, and wholly subdued it,



Silver Penny of Ceolwulf, King of Mercia.



Saxon Ships.

at this very time, Healfdene and Guthrum sought to conquer Wessex, the only barrier to their overwhelming power. Alfred, for seven years, had been carrying on a desultory contest, with no marked result. He made truce after truce; he exacted oaths; he received hostages. With the exception of his first naval battle, in 875, the king appears to have been constantly aiming at

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a false security by vain negotiation. This, as it presents itself to our imperfect historical knowledge, is inexplicable, except upon the theory that he had lost the confidence of his people. Mr. Turner adopts this belief, with every desire to do justice to the character of Alfred. In the life of St. Neot, the young king is accused of arrogance. Some of the later monastic chroniclers take up the tale, and speak of his vices. In his Life, it is said that his misfortunes were not unmerited, and this is the reason,—"Because, in the first part of his reign, when he was a young man, and governed by a youthful mind, when the men of his kingdom and his subjects came to him and besought his aid in their necessities,—when they who were oppressed by the powerful implored his assistance and defence,—he was unwilling to hear them, nor lent them any help, but held them of no account." This passage has found its way into most biographies of Alfred, and histories of his times, and has called forth many explanations of the probable circumstances which led to such a remarkable deviation from his general principles and subsequent course of life. St. Neot, it is alleged upon the authority of an ancient manuscript, exhorted him to depart entirely from his unrighteousness. Another manuscript records that the saint said to him, "You shall be deprived of that very sovereignty, of whose vain splendour you are so extravagantly arrogant." In a Latin poem he is reproached with being "dissolute, cruel, proud, and severe." These charges must be received with caution; for, as the monastic writers gloried in Alfred's principles and justice, so might they, not unnaturally, attribute to the influence of his religious advisers the wonderful exhibition of courage, constancy, and moderation, which made him the traditionary "darling of England"—"the truth-teller." Some of the subsequent chroniclers adopted these views, and transmitted them to posterity four centuries after the events recorded. But the greatest reliance is placed upon the testimony of Asser, as supposed to be given in the words which we have quoted above. "He loved his royal master," says Mr. Turner, "and we cannot read his artless biography of him, without perceiving that it is not likely he would have ever told his faults, or have even mentioned them, if they had not been then too well known to have been omitted by an honest writer." The true Asser, it appears, did not mention them. It was reserved for a spurious Asser to embody the scandals of a previous century. The passage thus relied upon is held, upon very sufficient evidence, to be an interpolation in Asser's genuine manuscript. In the preface to the "Monumenta Historica Britannica," the inconsistencies of the narrative are pointed out. Alfred might have obtained the throne in his brother's lifetime by his good qualities. For seven years his struggles against the enemy are described. Then we suddenly find him accused, in the passage here given, of neglecting the complaints of his subjects; but when he re-appears after his seclusion (as we shall presently see), the whole population are filled with delight. The writer of the Preface then says, "Now the explanation of this inconsistency, and of other similar difficulties, seems to be, that many passages of the printed text formed no part of Asser's works, but were the insertions of Archbishop Parker." The archbishop first published the Life in 1574: and, it seems, incorporated passages from a MS. of the twelfth century, entitled "Chronicon Fani S. Neoti, sive Annales Johannes Asserii," which is a compilation from various sources by an

anonymous writer, and contains passages from a work by Abbo, who wrote fourscore years after Asser's death.

But, whatever doubt may attach to these relations, there can be no doubt that Alfred was left, in his great hour of need, without support, if not without sympathy. It appears to us that the humiliating treaties, which have been imputed to him as an individual fault; the comparative inaction during seven years; the somewhat absurd imposition of Christian oaths upon pagan enemies,—may find a reasonable explanation,—that Alfred was surrounded by a timid and feeble witan. The king had no power of himself to conclude peace or make war, without the authority of the witan. The great peace which was concluded with Guthrum in 878, runs thus: "This is the peace that Alfred the king, and Guthrum the king, and the witan of all the English nation, and all the people that are in East-Anglia, have all ordained," &c. The wild-boar of Æscesdun was chafing with pent-up sorrows, while ealdormen and bishops were counselling safety in submission. The terrible spoliations of East Anglia and Mercia were, in their view, to be averted by tribute, and by oaths upon relics of saints, and the heathens' own "holy ring." The catastrophe justifies this interpretation. Authentic history shows that he was meditating a deliverance from foreign foes—perhaps from domestic treason*—by one of those bold actions which decide the fate of nations. "This year (878) during midwinter, after twelfth night, the army stole away to Chippenham, and overran the land of the West-Saxons, and sat down there; and many of the people they drove beyond sea, and of the remainder the greater part they subdued and forced to obey them, *except king Alfred.*" † Where was king Alfred? He is fled, no one knows whither. Where are his thanes and his prelates? They are not with him. "He, with a small band, with difficulty retreated to the woods, and to the fastnesses of the moors." ‡ King Alfred relies upon himself alone. The regal pomp, whatever that might be, is no more. Aged councillors no longer exhort him against the indulgence of youthful rashness. Reverend priests no longer preach of the virtues of relics and the protection of saints. He is naked and powerless; but he was never so truly master of his own fortune, as in this point of his uttermost depression.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle notices a triumph over the Danes in Devonshire; and then takes up the story of Alfred again. The king retreated to the woods and moors, after Twelfth-night, in 878. "At Easter," says the Chronicle, "king Alfred, with a small band, constructed a fortress at Athelney; and from this fortress, with that part of the men of Somerset which was nearest to it, from time to time they fought against the army." In the genuine text of Asser we find that during this wintry season, from Twelfth-night to Easter, the king, with a few nobles, and certain soldiers and vassals, led an unquiet life, in great tribulation, amongst the woodlands of Somersetshire. It was the outlaw's life. Under the Anglo-Saxon laws every man was bound to have a settled habitation. Whether freeman or thrall, to be a wanderer was to be in peril. In the laws of king Ina, which were confirmed by Alfred, it is written,—"If a far-coming man, or a stranger, journey through a wood out of the highway, and neither shout nor blow his horn, he is to be held for a thief, either to be slain or redeemed." § But this fugitive band

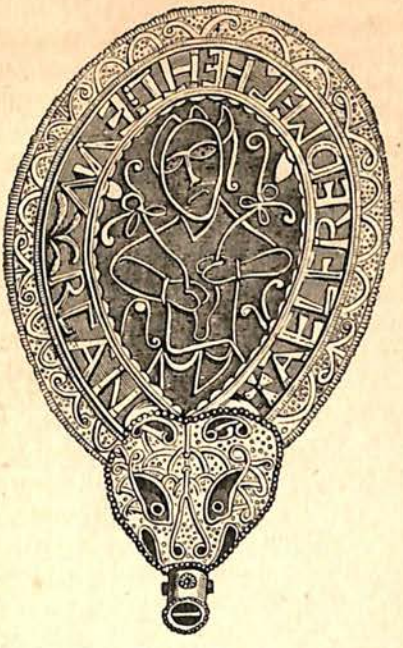
* See Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 52. † Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. ‡ Ibid.
§ Ancient Laws and Institutes, p. 50.

were not only hiding from their oppressors, but were compelled to plunder for subsistence. Utterly destitute of the necessaries of life, they sallied forth from their coverts, to compel the pagans, or those who were under the dominion of the pagans, to give them food. The stories which relieve the dry historical narrative of its uniformity, and which the dramatist and the painter alike rejoice in, belong to this period. Alfred sits by the fire in a cowherd's cottage, in which he had found refuge, mending his bow, instead of minding the loaves which are baking on the hearth. Who knows not how the impatient housewife vented her anger upon the stranger, reproaching him that he suffered the bread to burn which he was ready enough to eat? The wrathful speech of the good dame appears in the original in the form of two Latin verses. We have no complaint against the parade of knowledge which thus puts the mark of the cloister upon the traditionary songs of the people. Again, the legendary tales show how the Saxon hero, in his adversity, was visited by Saint Cuthbert, who, in the shape of a poor man, asked for alms of the fugitive. In a miserable hut sits Alfred with his wife. He has one loaf of bread, which he divides with the beggar. The saint vanishes; but in a vision announces that the days of the king's adversity are passed, and that glory and honour are before him. Again: Alfred is a minstrel. He finds admission to the Danish camp. He wanders from tent to tent with his harp. His skill reaches the knowledge of the Danish king. He is feasted and welcomed. But he has noted the numbers and position of his enemies, and returns to Athelney, to lead forth his followers to victory. Who would be fastidious about the authenticity of such narratives? They affect no principle. They lead to no erroneous conclusions. We must take them for what they are, and be glad of them:

"Dreams that the soul of youth engage
Ere fancy has been quelled;
Old legends of the monkish page,
Traditions of the saint and sage,
Tales that have the rime of age,
And chronicles of eld." *

* Longfellow.

The monkish page."



Alfred's Jewel.

CHAPTER VIII.

Battle of Ethandune—Alfred's and Guthrum's Peace—Laws of Alfred—Alfred as an Administrator—Alfred as an Instructor—Improvement of Alfred's kingdom—Renewed attacks of the Danes—The land freed from invaders—Alfred's Character—Judicial subdivisions of the kingdom—Frank-pledge—Courts of Justice—Tenure of Lands.

The enamelled ornament of gold which was dug up at Athelney,—the marshy spot which Alfred fortified at the confluence of the Thone and the Parret—bears the inscription, "Alfred commanded me to be wrought." It is regarded as a genuine relic. It is treasured in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, as a most valuable evidence of the historical truth of the description of the locality from which Alfred burst forth upon the invaders of his country. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells of this event in a few simple words: "Then, in the seventh week after Easter, he rode to Ecgbryht's-stone, on the east of Selwood; and there came to meet him all the men of Somerset, and the men of Wiltshire, and that portion of the men of Hampshire which was on this side of the sea; and *they were joyful at his presence.*" With these plain but most impressive words we may associate the "old legends of the monkish page" in our memories; and believe that they long kept up, amongst the people, the reverence for their national hero which has lived through a thousand years.

The battle of Ethandune,* which quickly followed the joyful greeting of the men of Wessex to their recovered king, was one of those decisive conflicts which entirely change the position of two contending powers. At the beginning of

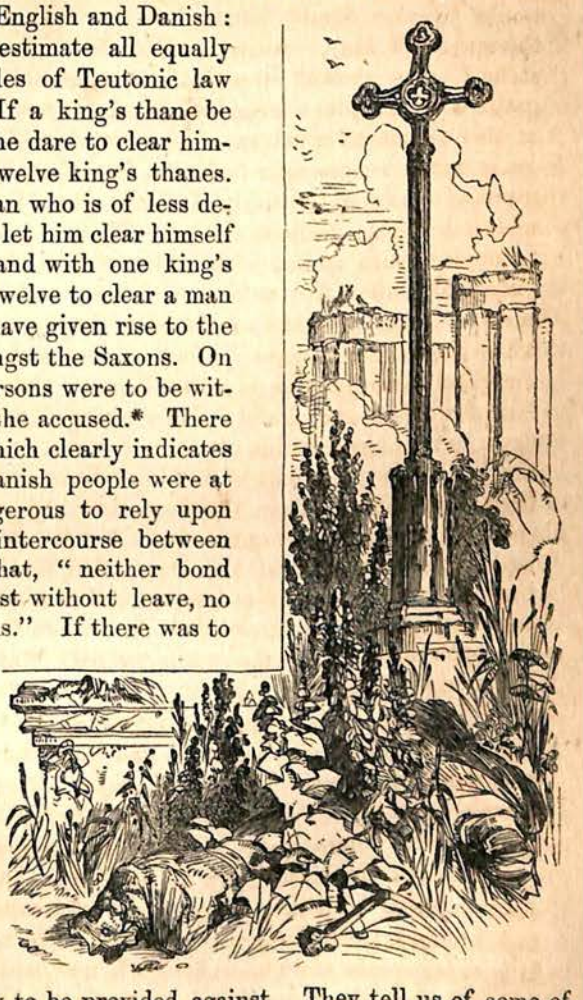
* Conjectured to be Edington, near Westbury.

the year 878, the Danes were at Chippenham, a royal town of the West Saxons. The king had fled no one knew whither. The invaders sat down as if their possession were never to be disturbed. In Devonshire, as we have mentioned, the Danes had sustained a signal defeat at this period. But in Wiltshire they overran the country at their pleasure. In that year Easter fell on the 23rd of March. Alfred was in Athelney. On this small space of rising ground, defended in the spring time by the waters of the Thone and the Parret, and by the impassable marshes, was the king's camp of refuge. To cross from that little island of alder-wood to the more inland country, the fugitive Saxons would be compelled to traverse many a mile in boats. As the spring advanced, the floods would abate, and the swampy ground would afford a firmer footing. Seven weeks after that Easter—that is, in the middle of May,—Alfred and his few followers had marched to Egbert-stone.* He showed himself to the assembled people; and there soon gathered round him a formidable band. It was the secresy and the suddenness of this movement which saved the kingdom of the West Saxons. No doubt many a trusty messenger had gone forth from the island of the Somersetshire marshes to stir up the spirit of the people. Even Alfred himself might have undertaken this perilous errand. There must have been some organisation to precede such an individual enterprise as that which the Saxon king had undertaken, after five months of danger and humiliation. But in all such cases it is the presence of the man, hoping everything, daring everything, which commands success. Once more the Saxon population was in arms. They had a leader. They gathered round their lost king with a rapture that cast away fear and doubt. He encamped for one night. At the earliest dawn he was again on his march, and again encamped at night-fall. On the third day came the shock of battle at Ethandune. The Danes had come out from their camp to meet the host that had so suddenly sprung up. They appeared in overpowering numbers; but the Saxons met them in dense array. After an obstinate fight the Danes fled to their fortress. To the edge of their camp the king pursued, carrying terror with him in unsparing slaughter. Shutting themselves up in their fastnesses, they ventured no other fight in the open field. But the whole country was roused. On every side the Dane was beleaguered. No supplies could reach his starving soldiers; and after fourteen days of terrible privation, Guthrum, the conqueror of East Anglia, offered to give hostages, and quit the kingdom of Wessex. Alfred had conquered peace. But he had higher objects than the humiliation of his enemy. The Danes had too secure possession of East Anglia to be easily driven out. There, they had become settlers and cultivators. They had entered into the nationality of England. They desired to enter into the community of Christian states, and to renounce the heathendom which they had brought from the great seats of northern superstition. Guthrum, the king, seven weeks after his submission, was baptised with thirty of his officers; Alfred being his sponsor, and he receiving the name of Athelstan. There can be no doubt of the wisdom of this reconciliation. East Anglia had been long peopled with Danish tribes, who had become Christians; and the new settlers were as strangers amongst them, in their heathendom. The con-

* Brixton Deverill, in Wiltshire.

version of Guthrum made them one people. Alfred, in entering into treaty with these settlers, was making an advance towards a complete nationality which was to be perfected in the fulness of time by common religion and common laws.

The treaty of peace between the Saxons and the Danes—"Alfred's and Guthrum's Peace"—contains much fewer provisions than the treaties of modern times. The land boundaries between the territories are first defined. There is nothing said of the evacuation of territory into which the Danes had obtruded; nor of the adoption of the Christian faith. The setting out of boundaries assumes the one; and the oaths upon which the peace was sworn were made in the name of those who "seek of God's mercy." There was to be equal justice for English and Danish: "If a man be slain, we estimate all equally dear." The same principles of Teutonic law applied to both people. "If a king's thane be accused of man-slaying, if he dare to clear himself, let him do that with twelve king's thanes. If any one accuse that man who is of less degree than the king's thane, let him clear himself with eleven of his equals, and with one king's thane." This number of twelve to clear a man from a capital charge may have given rise to the notion of trial by jury amongst the Saxons. On the contrary, the twelve persons were to be witnesses of the innocence of the accused.* There is a clause in this treaty which clearly indicates that the Saxon and the Danish people were at feud, and that it was dangerous to rely upon peaceful and neighbourly intercourse between them. It was ordained that, "neither bond nor free might go to the host without leave, no more than any of them to us." If there was to be traffic amongst them, with cattle and with goods, hostages were to be given in pledge of peace, and as evidence that those who went to the strangers' camp or frontier went for lawful purposes.† Such regulations exhibit a remarkable picture of society, in which man-slaying and plunder were especially to be provided against. They tell us of some of the difficulties which the Saxon king and his ealdormen and sheriffs had to contend with, in reducing the land to civil obedience after a condition approaching to anarchy; and how absolutely necessary was a wise and



* See page 109.

† "As evidence whereby it may be known that the party has a clean back."

vigorous ruler to prevent the few remaining sparks of civilisation being trodden out.

The repose which Alfred had won by his courage and policy, and which was, for some years, in a great degree uninterrupted, was dedicated by him to two great objects,—the establishment of order, and the removal of ignorance. The Saxon king now presents himself to our view as invested with a more exclusive power than appertained to the old Teutonic rulers. Although chosen from a peculiar royal race, the sovereign was anciently little elevated above his ealdormen. A higher value was set upon his life; and a higher bōt, or compensation, was to be paid to him by offenders. But in Alfred's laws, in which the principle of compensation was ascribed to the influence of Christianity, instead of to the old institutions of the Saxon people, the bōt was expressly set aside in the case of treason. The king has therefore been accused of "anti-national and despotic tendencies." * This accusation appears to be somewhat unmerited. The peculiar character of Alfred's code, differing in that respect from the "dooms" which had preceded it, is the incorporation of the commandments delivered to Moses, and the precepts of Christ, with the enactments that belonged to the social condition of the Anglo-Saxon people. Many of the minor laws of the Hebrew legislator are also copied with slight variation.† But the great Christian law of mercy and justice is also enacted: "That which ye will that other men do not unto you, do ye not that to other men;" and it is added, "From this one doom a man may remember that he judge every one righteously; he need heed no other doom-book." In the religious sanctions and obligations of Alfred's laws we trace the distinct incorporation of the Church with the State. In the increased sanctity attached to the person of the king, we see how a dominant monarchical power had grown out of the mere chieftainship of the earlier rulers. That Alfred was a cautious legislator is manifest from his own declaration in promulgating this code: "I, Alfred, king, gathered these together, and commanded many of them to be written which our forefathers held, those which to me seemed good; and many of those which seemed to me not good, I rejected them, by the counsel of my witan, and in other wise commanded them to be holden. For I durst not venture to set down in writing much of my own, for it was unknown to me what of it would please those who should come after us." ‡ If some of the laws of Alfred appear very strange to us, from our want of knowledge of the minuter particulars of the Saxon social state, we can have no doubt that they were thoroughly practical. The king implies that he had conceived much of his own—a system, probably, less Teutonic than the code he adopted. But in the true spirit of legislation he was unwilling to make any violent innovations If the Teutonic laws of Alfred are, for the most part, inapplicable to the modern condition of society, the spirit in which they were promulgated has been faithfully preserved amongst us. Whatever we hold most valuable in our constitution has been secured to us by the same care, which existed ten centuries ago, to preserve what seemed good, to reject what seemed not good, to repair with watchfulness, and to add with caution.

It is as a vigilant administrator, rather than as an original legislator, that

* Kemble's Saxons, vol. ii. p. 208.

† The first forty-eight clauses of Alfred's Dooms are from the Book of Exodus, chapters xx. to xxiii.

‡ Ancient Laws and Institutes, p. 26.

the civil merits of Alfred are chiefly to be estimated. There are doubts whether Trial by Jury formed any part of the Saxon institutions; but it is sufficiently clear that the modern functions of a jury formed no part of the practice of the public assemblies in which causes were tried. There was a presiding officer in such courts—the ealdorman, the sheriff, or some inferior functionary. Alfred is said to have appointed judges distinct from the general authorities of the shires or hundreds. But the duties of those judges, whether especially selected or otherwise, were simply presidential. There was no evidence to balance, circumstantial or direct. When an accused person was put upon his deliverance, he might choose to rest upon testimony of character. He made oath as to his own innocence, and called upon a certain number of neighbours whose "worth," or money value, was duly assessed, to give the like testimony. If a sufficient number made oath to the same effect, the accused was free. But if the compurgation, as it was called, failed, he had then to appeal to the "judgment of God," in going through ordeals. There were various forms of ordeal. The hand was plunged into boiling water; a red-hot iron was carried nine paces. If no injury appeared after three days, the accused was declared innocent. If compurgation and ordeal failed to acquit him, then was bōt to be made for the lesser offences. For the 'boteles' crimes there was capital punishment. Every offence, and its penalty, were exactly defined. When, therefore, we read, that in the courts of Alfred's earls and officers there was perpetual complaint of their decisions; that all, except the guilty, desired the personal judgment of the king; that the king inquired into all judgments, whether they were just or unjust; that he summoned unjust judges before him, and rebuked them for their misdoings either through corruption or ignorance, telling the ignorant judges that they had neglected the studies of the wise; * we are at a loss to understand how the sagacity of the king or the blindness of the judges could have advanced or retarded the equal administration of laws so narrow and so absolute. There is something behind. The whole system of ordeal was necessarily open to the grossest frauds; and it was, probably, to their detection that Alfred applied his own acuteness, and demanded the vigilance of others, to call forth righteous judgments out of such fallible means of discovering the truth. But there was a difficulty in the administration even of this rude justice, which demanded some sagacity. Various districts and kingdoms had come under the West-Saxon rule, and amongst these, various customary laws had prevailed. There were Kentish laws, Mercian laws, Danish laws, which prevented uniformity of judgment, and were especially embarrassing to judges so ignorant as Asser has described those of Alfred's time to have been. The king's unremitting efforts seem to have been directed,—first, to correct the ignorance of those in authority, to whom he said, "I marvel at your insolence, who, by God's gift and mine, have taken upon yourselves the ministry and rank of wise men, but have neglected the study and labour of wisdom. Now, it is my command that ye either give up at once the administration of those secular powers which ye enjoy, or pay a much more devoted attention to the study of wisdom." † If this be despotism, it is a despotism devoutly to be prayed for, even in the nineteenth century. But Alfred knew that, in the general spread of knowledge, the rulers of the people could not remain

* See Asser, at the end of the Life.

† Asser.

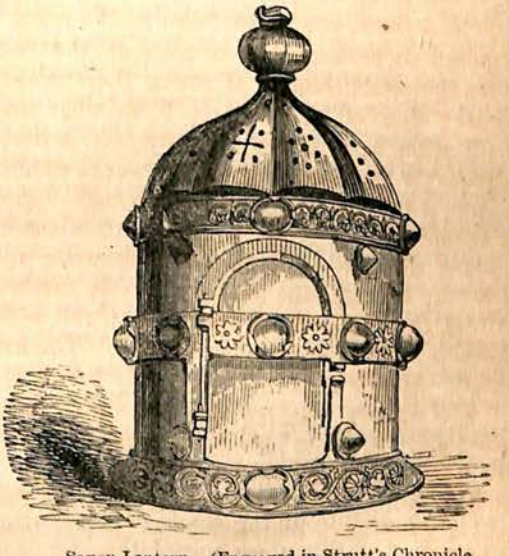
ignorant. In that interval of rest which followed the submission of the Danes, in 878, the king gathered around him learned men from various districts. They read to him; they interpreted to him. In 884, he induced Asser, a Welsh monk, to reside with him during a part of the year. "I came into Saxony," Asser tells us, "from the extreme limits of western Britain, summoned by the king. After I had set out, I arrived, through many wide intervening ways, in the country of the South Saxons, which is called in Saxon, Suthseaxe (Sussex), guided by some of that nation. There I first saw him in the royal vill called Dene.* After being kindly received by him, in the course of conversation he earnestly entreated me to devote myself to his service, to give myself wholly up to him, and for his love to relinquish all my possessions on the other side of the Severn. He promised to compensate me richly, as he actually did." The learned Welshman would not forego his native cloister; but he promised to return, and give half his time to the king's companionship. In one sojourn of eight months, Asser says, "I translated and read to him whatever books he wished, which were within our reach; for it was his peculiar and perpetual custom, day and night, amidst all his afflictions of mind and body, either to read books himself, or to have them read to him by others." In due time Alfred, himself, became a teacher. No one ever devoted himself to the business of authorship with greater earnestness and a higher sense of duty, than this remarkable Saxon. During the fourteen years which had followed the peace with Guthrum, although he was exposed to occasional incursions of the northern pirates, his great works were the establishment of order, the consolidation of his kingdom, and the improvement of his people. With what heart he laboured in building up civilisation upon general knowledge, is best shown by his own Preface to Gregory's Pastorals, one of the works which he translated from Latin into Saxon, a copy of which he sent to each bishop's see, with the injunction that it should remain in the minster, unless the bishop took it with him, "or it be lent somewhere until somebody write another copy." In the age before printing this was the only practicable method of multiplying books. What Alfred thus did was for example, as well as for the direct improvement to be derived from that particular book. The learning of the clergy had degenerated. He laments that "formerly people came hither to this land in search of wisdom and teaching, and we must now obtain them from without, if we must have them." He then describes the inability of the priests to make their breviaries intelligible to the general population.† He next exhorts Bishop Wulsige, to whom he addressed this Preface, that he bestow the wisdom which God gave him wherever he can bestow it. The mode by which he proposes to make knowledge more general, is that of translation. The Scriptures had been translated from Hebrew into Greek and Latin and other tongues. "Therefore, it appears to me better, if you think so, that we also, for some books which seem most needful for all men to understand, that we translate them into that language that we can all understand, and cause, as we very easily may with God's help, if we have the leisure, that all the youth that is now in the English nation of free men, such as have wealth to maintain themselves, may be put to learning, while they can employ themselves in

* Supposed to be East Dean, or West Dean, near Chichester.

† See p. 87.

nothing else, till at first they can read well English writing. Afterwards let people teach further in the Latin tongue those whom they will teach further and ordain to higher degree. When I thought how the learning of the Latin language before this was decayed through the English people, though many could read English writing, then I began among other divers and manifold affairs of this kingdom to translate into English the book which is named in Latin *Pastoralis*, and in English *Herdsman's Book*, sometimes word for word, sometimes meaning for meaning, as I learnt it of Plegmund my archbishop, and of Asser my bishop, and of Grimbold my presbyter, and of John my presbyter. After I had then learnt it so that I understood it as well as my understanding could allow me, I translated it into English." * The modesty, the zeal, the common sense of this beautiful specimen of Anglo-Saxon prose (the version being as literal as possible) will be manifest to every reader. Perhaps some may think that if the spirit of this teacher, who lived in what we call a barbarous age, had descended upon those who have governed the people since his times, we, in this so-called civilised age, should not have to lament as he lamented, that "we have loved only the name of being Christians, and very few the duties."

The intellectual labour of this king was incessant. In the narrative of Asser we see the inner life of the diligent student; but we see also the ever-present responsibilities of the unconquerable king. The Danes, under their great leader Hasting, are blockading the Loire, in 882. Suddenly they turn to England, having concluded a truce with France. Alfred has learned the true defence of the island, and defeats his enemies at sea. In 884 they land in Kent, and besiege Rochester. Alfred is there with his army, and drives them back to their ships. He has again rest. The internal improvement of the country is his chief care. He founds new religious establishments. He establishes schools in the various towns. He builds fortresses. He repairs roads. He reconstructs cities, especially London, out of the ashes of a desolating warfare. But amidst all this earnest work, he has time for his books. He translates Boetius,† interspersing the original with constant additions from his own rich thoughts. Bede's English History is rendered by him from Latin into Saxon; and so is the ancient History of Orosius, to the geographical portions of which he made interesting additions. Some of



Saxon Lantern. (Engraved in Strutt's Chronicle of England.)

* We take these passages from Mr. Wright's version in "Biographia Britannica Literaria."

† This Latin book, "De Consolatione Philosophiæ," was written early in the sixth century, and was very popular in the middle ages.

the original copies of these works are still preserved. Other translations are ascribed to him. He evidently laboured upon a systematic principle in the diffusion of knowledge. He saw what the great body of his countrymen required; and he also knew what would interest them. The Pastorale of Pope Gregory was a plain treatise on the duties of the parochial clergy. It was not addressed to the learned; but was a practical manual for those who were the natural instructors of the laity. It was, in English, "The Herdsman's Book." For the people themselves he prepared works of history and geography. Orosius gave him a summary of ancient history, from the earliest times to the Roman age of Honorius, A.D. 416. But that history was written by a Christian, and Orosius constantly holds up the Christian virtues, in opposition to the violations of justice and humanity, which are rarely blamed by the Heathen historians. Bede's Ecclesiastical History furnished Alfred with the most authentic record of the past annals of his own country. In Orosius there is a short summary of geographical knowledge, to which Alfred made some valuable additions, of especial interest to his countrymen. Two northern navigators came to the king, and from their personal relations he prepared a clear and concise statement of the northernmost countries, from which the Saxon race sprang. He tells, on their authority, of the waste lands which the Fins inhabit, obtaining a precarious subsistence by hunting and fishing; of wealthy men, whose possessions consisted of rein-deer; of seas where the walrus and the whale were in abundance; of Eastland and the Esthonians, where there are many towns, and where the rich drank mare's milk, and the poor and the slaves drank mead. He describes the coasts of Scandinavia with singular precision. How true all this is we know at the present day. The royal teacher published no wild stories, such as are found in other Saxon writers who came after him, of people with dogs' heads, boars' tusks, and horses' manes; of headless giants, or those with two faces on one head. Truth was in itself, as it always will be, the best foundation for interesting narrative. Add to these books the pure morality which Alfred disseminated in his Boetius, and we have the model of a just system of popular instruction. Works such as these, large and general in their views, were especially adapted to an insular people, and were wisely added to their national legends and songs. The king himself held communication, as much as it were possible, with the distant world. He corresponded with Rome, by ambassadors and by letters. He maintained a communication with the patriarch of Jerusalem; and, what strikes us as most remarkable, he sent a bishop, with bounteous gifts, to the Syrian Christians in India. The overland journey to the coasts of Malabar was not an easy undertaking in those days. When we regard this man's manifold exertions, we naturally ask how these tasks were accomplished. The answer is given by the familiar story of his lantern-clock. He strictly apportioned his time to the performance of his several duties. To note the progress of the day and night, he caused wax-candles to be made of equal weight and size, so that six candles would burn for twenty-four hours. Minuter divisions of time were marked on each candle. But the wind blowing through the churches in which he worshipped, and the halls and tents in which he studied, made the exposed tapers irregular monitors. He remedied the difficulty by inventing the horn-lantern.

Thus passed, in comparative tranquillity, the life of the industrious king, from his thirtieth to his forty-fourth year. Children were growing up around him. Ethelfled, his eldest daughter, who was married to the Earl of Mercia, inherited the heroic spirit of her father. Edward, the elder son, succeeded to his father's throne. There was another son, and two other daughters. Asser describes the great care bestowed on their education Alfred provided amply for his children, both on "the spear side and the spindle side," as his will expresses. But he made an especial provision for the preponderating wealth and power of the eldest son. That great inheritance of kingly dominion, built upon national independence, was preserved for a century by Alfred's courage, sagacity, and perseverance. His work was not ended when Guthrum, the Dane, who had made several ineffectual attempts to shake off his allegiance, died in 890. There was another Northman even more dangerous than the piratical King of East Anglia. During the few years of rest which England had won by Alfred's exertions, France was purchasing exemption from plunder by paying tribute. At the same period the countries of the Rhine, the Scheldt, and the Meuse, were overrun by the invaders. The opulent towns were pillaged and burnt. Trèves, Cologne, Maestricht, Tolbiac, Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, and many other strong and rich cities, that had flourished from the Roman times, were sacked and destroyed. The whole country of the Netherlands suffered in the same way. The wide-spreading ruin was again threatening England. But Alfred was at his post. No more quiet studies. No more friendly colloquies with Asser about ancient literature. No jotting-down of striking passages in his daily note-book. In 894, Alfred was, substantially, the king of all England. In that year the Danes, who had previously established a landing in the mouth of the Thames, effected another landing in Kent. Alfred was not unprepared. He did not call out the whole adult population to meet the invaders, but had made a wise provision for the due cultivation of the land, by calling out half the population for military service, leaving the other half in their homes. Each half, in its turn, exercised the duties of war and of industry. During the interval of peace he had also created a navy. There were two Danish armies to encounter. The one was posted on the Swale, near Milton; the other was on the coast. The whole fertile lands of Kent lay exposed to their ravages. On the Essex coast were the doubtful East Anglians, who would follow the fortunes of Hasting if they led to victory. Alfred threw himself between the two armies. The Dane saw his danger, and resorted to negociation. He agreed to leave the country, and sent to the king two of his sons as hostages. But he meditated treachery. The hostages had been returned by the confiding Saxon. Then the army which had been landed in Kent suddenly marched across the country; but before a junction could be effected, Alfred pursued that army to Farnham, and defeated the Northmen in a general engagement. The enemy fled through Essex, and finally took refuge in the Isle of Mersey, at the mouth of the Colne. The king blockaded the fugitive remnant; but, in the meanwhile, some of the colonists of East Anglia fitted out a great armament, and, sailing along the southern coast, attacked Exeter. Another fleet, coasting round the northern parts of the island, reached the Bristol Channel. Hasting, who had remained in the Swale, now sailed up the Thames, and

devastated Mercia. But wherever the enemy was, there was Alfred. He drove him out of Exeter. He cleared Mercia of its ravagers, and they again fled to the Isle of Mersey. They had established an alliance in East Anglia, and, with powerful reinforcements, the next year marched across the country, and took possession of Chester. Again was Alfred after them; and again he drove them to the east. They towed their ships up the Thames into the Lea, where they fortified themselves. The Londoners attacked them, but were repulsed. It was the approaching harvest-time of 896, and Alfred brought up his army to prevent the invaders from gathering the corn. The Danes rested securely in their strong position, while the king appeared to be inactive. He was accomplishing one of those original conceptions of military genius which, in all ages, have characterised the few great masters of strategy, who stand apart from those ordinary commanders who regard war as a mere trial of physical strength, in which superiority of numbers is alone wanting to ensure victory. The Danish ships were in the Lea; the army was close at hand in its entrenchments. Alfred turned the course of the river below his enemy's position. The channel by which the Danes could bring out their vessels became dry.* The labourers upon the new cuts were protected by Alfred's fortified encampment. The invading army then marched through the midland counties to the Severn, and the Londoners seized the deserted vessels. Hasting entrenched himself at Bridgenorth during the ensuing winter; but the spirit of the invaders was broken, and Hasting left the country. The coast was still harassed by frequent descents of the piratical enemy. The great general now became, as Southey terms him, "the first English admiral." He was not a routine administrator, adhering to old models. The Saxon ships, as ordinarily built, were inferior to the æscs of the Northmen, as their vessels were termed. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes Alfred's preparation for naval warfare: "Then King Alfred commanded long ships to be built to oppose the æscs; they were full nigh twice as long as the others; some had sixty oars, and some had more; they were both swifter and steadier, and also lighter than the others. They were shapen neither like the Frisian nor the Danish; but so as it seemed to him that they would be most efficient." With these ships Alfred went forth to his sea-fights. He swept the coast wherever the marauders appeared, and with a terrible severity he executed the men he captured as pirates. They were pirates, upon the largest scale that had been ever seen; and their system had become intolerable throughout Europe. The great enemy was at length completely overcome. The Danish raven was no more seen on the English shores. The flag was triumphant that "has braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze." Alfred secured his kingdom's peace in 897. Within four years, in 901, he was called, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

The history of England during the days of Alfred has necessarily been the biography of one man; for the character of one ruler never more completely influenced the destinies of his country. Alfred saved England from foreign domination. He raised her in the scale of nations, and maintained her in the fellowship of Christian communities. He was the first who clearly

* Camden says, that the Lea, by this operation, was obstructed for seven hundred years, till its navigation was restored by Lord Burleigh.

saw that there was a people to be instructed and civilised. He ruled over a small state, but his exertions had a world-wide influence. The Saxon people never forgot him. In three generations after his death, in the first year of the eleventh century, they were subdued by the same Danes that he had driven out; and in another century came a greater conquest and a heavier yoke. But Alfred saved his own race from destruction; and whatever were to be the after-fortunes of that race, the indomitable courage, the religious endurance, the heart and hope of this man, under every trial, constituted a precious bequest to the crown and to the nation. The energy of the warrior king was emulated by his immediate descendants, if they could not attempt to combine in so eminent a degree the contemplative with the active principle, as he had combined them. But he presented to his own time, and to all coming time, a model which, to a certain extent, represents our national character, in its union of reflection with action. The world of thought and the world of deed are not with us separated, as with some nations. This notion of the impress of Alfred's character upon the Anglo-Saxon race, or of Alfred presenting a type of that race, may be fanciful; but, at any rate, the leading principle of duty, as the end of life, still survives amongst us. It is our battle-cry and our household precept. In many respects we live in a selfish age, in which duty and interest are confounded; with most of us pretentious, and with too many unscrupulous. We may be better by being tried by adversity, as this Alfred was tried. But whatever may be our vices and shortcomings, we are yet able to do honour to the great Saxon, who, in no boastful spirit, wrote of himself:—"This I can now truly say, that so long as I lived I have striven to live worthily, and after my death to leave my memory to my descendants, in good works."

The character of Alfred has a strong hold upon our affections; and much of this may proceed from the circumstance that we see more of his private life, through his attached biographer, than of the individuality of any other of the kings of that obscure period. In our eyes he is not an abstraction, as most others of the race of Woden appear to us. Alfred is not always present in armour and purple—the crown on his head and the sword in his hand. We see him afflicted with disease, but never bowed down by despondency and inaction. He is amongst his children, who reverence him as father and king, but love him as friend and companion. He is gossiping with artificers about their various callings; looking after his falconers and dog-keepers; trying mechanical experiments; and reciting old Saxon poems at his social board. He is at prayer openly in the churches; and secretly he humbly kneels on the steps of the altar to pour out his heart to Him who is "the stem and foundation of all blessings."* He is reading in his plainly-furnished chamber, where the wind sings through the coarse hangings, as he looks exultingly upon the lantern which shields his solitary taper. He is discussing with Asser the exact meaning of a Latin passage, and finally transcribes it in his note-book. He is reckoning his revenues, setting aside one portion for his military and civil service; another for public works; and another for religious purposes, for education, and for the poor. We see him exhorting those in authority to do their duty, mildly and moderately reproving such as had neglected the just discharge of their functions. We see him affable and pleasant to all, and

* Words added by Alfred to Boetius.

eagerly curious to enlarge his knowledge by familiar questions. We may be quite sure that he was too wise to be always playing the king and the sage; and we perceive distinctly that, like all the really great men that ever lived, he was essentially simple and practical in the higher as well as humbler concerns of life. His character can very well afford to bear the charges of the monastic writers, that in his early years he was proud, severe, even dissolute. It is in the conquest of the passions that the resolute will first asserts itself; and after that conquest the light breaks, and all is calm and beauty. Adversity has no degradation, and prosperity no danger, when that struggle is over.

Hume says of Alfred, "That he might render the execution of justice strict and regular, he divided all England into counties; those counties he subdivided into hundreds; and the hundreds into tithings." This statement is found in some of the chroniclers. The words of Malmesbury are these: "Since, from the example of the barbarians, the natives themselves began to lust after rapine, insomuch that there was no safe intercourse without a military guard, he (Alfred) appointed centuries, which they call 'hundreds' and 'decennaries,' that is to say, tithings; so that every Englishman, living according to law, must be a member of both. If any one was accused of a crime, he was obliged immediately to produce persons from the hundred and tithing to become his surety; and whosoever was unable to find such surety must dread the severity of the laws. If any who was implicated made his escape, either before or after he had found surety, all persons of the hundred and tithing paid a fine to the king." Ingulphus asserts that Alfred divided the kingdom into counties, hundreds, and tithings. There were, unquestionably, many large divisions of the various Saxon kingdoms before the time of Alfred; and the attribution to him of the subdivisions of hundreds and tithings is held to be of those conjectures which made the Saxon "darling" the origin of nearly all that was good in the ancient institutions. Mr. Kemble says, "Not one word in corroboration of it is to be found in Asser or any other contemporaneous authority." The very able author of the Introduction to the Census of 1851, observes,—"Some modern writers attempt to set aside the testimony of these Chroniclers" (Malmesbury and Ingulphus), "on the ground that they are unsupported by contemporary annals. They appear to forget that the Saxon Chronicle omits much that is in the elaborate life of Alfred by Asser, whose narrative terminates abruptly (A.D. 887), fourteen years before Alfred's death (901); and therefore no more exhausts the administrative measures than it exhausts the military achievements of the great king. The methodical division of his revenue, of his attendants into companies, and of his time, is described by Asser; and the division of the kingdom into hundreds and tithings is of the same artificial character." But Mr. Kemble maintains that the system existed long before Alfred was born, not only in other German lands but amongst ourselves. The earlier portion of Mr. Kemble's excellent work,* is to show how the system grew up. The settlers plant themselves upon the land, either by force, or in peaceful occupation of the vacant districts. The bond of family is first regarded. Each family has a hide of land,—some thirty cultivable acres.

* Saxons in England.

It is bookland—private property. Other families cluster around, for the protection and comfort of society. Ten families make a tithing. A wider personal or territorial division is found necessary for administrative purposes. A hundred families form a considerable community; and hence the hundreds. But for the purposes of general government there must be a still more extended circle. Each tithing or hundred has its folkland—land in common—wood, heath, marsh—originally the mark or boundary of the small community. The Ga, or Scir (shire), is the larger division; the forest, the river, the mountain, separating one wide district from another. It is incontestable that these divisions, and sub-divisions, at first personal and subsequently territorial, grew necessarily out of the very earliest condition of Saxon society; and in this point of view it may be denied that Alfred originated them. Mr. Kemble, however, to a certain extent, admits the general belief: "I am unwilling to incur the responsibility of declaring the tradition absolutely without foundation: on the contrary it seems probable that Alfred may have found it necessary, after the dreadful confusion and devastation of the Danish wars, to make a new muster or regulation of the tithings, nay, even to cause in some respects, a new territorial division to be established upon the old principle; and this is the more credible, since there is reason to believe that the same causes had rendered a new definition of boundaries generally necessary, even in the case of private estates." * We may add that Ingulphus says that Alfred had an Inquisition taken, which is the model of the Doomsday Survey; but there is no trace of such a survey in our public records.

The system of surety described by Malmesbury is known to us by the common name of Frank-pledge. Its real meaning is, the pledge of peace. Through an early mistake of one Saxon word for another—Freoborh for Friðborh—it has become frank-pledge or free pledge. It is, on the contrary, the enforced pledge to keep the king's peace. The institution is clearly described in the laws called Edward the Confessor's:

"Another peace, the greatest of all, there is, whereby all are maintained in firmer state, to wit in the establishment of a guarantee, which the English call Frithborgas, with the exception of the men of York, who call it Tenmannetale, that is, the number of ten men. And it consists in this, that in all the vills throughout the kingdom, all men are bound to be in a guarantee by tens, so that if one of the ten men offend, the other nine may hold him to right. But if he should flee, and they allege that they could not have him to right, then should be given them by the king's justice a space of at least thirty days and one: and if they could find him they might bring him to justice. But for himself, let him out of his own restore the damage he had done, or if the offence be so grave, let justice be done upon his body. But if within the aforesaid term he could not be found, since in every frithborh there was one headman whom they called frithborgheved, then this headman should take two of the best men of his frithborh, and the headman of each of the three frithborhs most nearly neighbouring to his own, and likewise two of the best in each, if he can have them; and so with the eleven others he shall, if he can, clear both himself and his frithborh both of the offence and flight of the aforesaid malefactor. Which if he cannot do, he shall restore the damage done out of

* Saxons in England, book i. chap. ix.

the property of the doer, so long as this shall last, and out of his own and that of his frithborh: and they shall make amends to the justice according as it shall be by law adjudged them. And, moreover, the oath which they could not complete with the *venue*, the nine themselves shall make, viz., that they had no part in the offence. And if at any time they can recover him, they shall bring him to the justice, if they can, or tell the justice where he is." *

The system of surety has necessarily become extinct in a condition of society where every man is master of his own actions till he comes under the cognisance of the law. Yet in this system of peace-pledge there is much to admire. It bound the individual members of a small community in a common fellowship, and a common interest in the due administration of justice. The universal submission of the English people to the authority of law is one of the most remarkable of their characteristics. Something of this ready acknowledgment of the supremacy of a moral power stronger than physical force, operating for the universal benefit, may be attributed to this Saxon institution. Words survive customs: My neighbour is my neah borh—my nigh pledge. In a law-proceeding of our own time, the *venue* where the action is laid is where the witnesses are at hand, to speak of their own knowledge as to what happened in their vicinage. These are the successors of the old sworn compurgators, who were *juratī*, or jurors, but not in our modern sense. When in our courts of justice a witness is called to character, there stands the representative of the Saxon neighbour, who is performing, in a lesser degree of responsibility, the same office of kindness which the compurgator performed in the days of Alfred. In the tithings or gylds, there were small courts of arbitration or police; and the men of the tithing appear, in their monthly meetings, to have observed, especially in London, those festive greetings without which municipal or national business amongst us is still supposed to be imperfectly performed. The hundred was a collection of ten tithings; and it had its monthly meetings also as a court of justice, but one of limited powers. The hundred was principally part of a system of police for the maintenance of peace. At this day when a riotous destruction of property cannot be redressed by the damages imposed upon a known offender or offenders, the sufferer goes for compensation to the hundred. But the great court was the shire-court. The administrative officers of this system were,—1. The "Ealdorman." He was sometimes called duke; and, next to that of the king, his was the highest authority. When long experience was held to be the best test of wisdom, the name Ealdorman, as the word Seigneur, implied a man of mature years,—the elder, or senior. His civil duty was to hold a shire-moot twice a year, in which he presided, in association with the bishop. The ealdorman had the highest judicial and executive authority in his shire, probably without appeal. We read of Alfred reproving unjust and ignorant judges, but we have no statement that he reversed their decisions. The dignity was not hereditary; though the ealdorman necessarily belonged to the class of nobles. We have already spoken of the ealdorman as a military leader. 2. The "Scírgeréfa"—the shire-reeve—the sheriff. This officer was, in a great degree, the deputy of the ealdorman; and he was also subject to the control of the bishop. But he was, practically, the county-court judge. The sheriff was also the fiscal officer of his district. He was appointed by the king, and could

* Kemble's Saxons in England, vol. i. p. 249.

be removed by the king.* 3. In towns—fortified places—there was a "burhgeréfa"—borough-reeve. 4. Beyond these officers, there were special reeves, exercising certain functions, as the reeve, or steward, of the king, or ealdorman, or bishop, and having judicial power in various courts inferior to the county-court. The principle of administration which was enforced as the duty of these officers is thus set forth in the laws of King Edward, the son and successor of Alfred:—"King Edward commands all the reeves: that ye judge such dooms as ye know to be most righteous, and as it in the doom-book stands. Fear not on any account to pronounce folk-right; and that every suit have a term when it shall be brought forward, that ye then may pronounce." In the last clause, the injunction is repeated: "I will that each reeve have a gemot always once in four weeks; and so do, that every man may be worthy of folk-right:† and that every suit have an end and term when it shall be brought forward." In these just principles and comprehensive arrangements for securing order and administering justice, we see an approach to the complete establishment of legal authority above the more ancient principle of feud and private revenge for individual wrong. But the right of aggrieved persons and of their kinsmen to interfere with the sober course of public law was acknowledged even by Alfred in his "dooms." The right of private war preceding the remedy of the law is distinctly set forth: "We also command, that the man who knows his foe to be home-sitting, fight not before he demand justice of him. If he have such power that he can beset his foe, and besiege him within, let him keep him within for seven days, and attack him not, if he will remain within." The siege and the battle were not likely to be far separated. In the same clause it is said,—"After the same wise, may a man fight on behalf of his born kinsman, if any wrongfully attack him, except, indeed, against his lord; that we permit not." It is from the laws, in all times, that we can best understand the condition of society; and here we see the state of warfare still contending against the state of order.

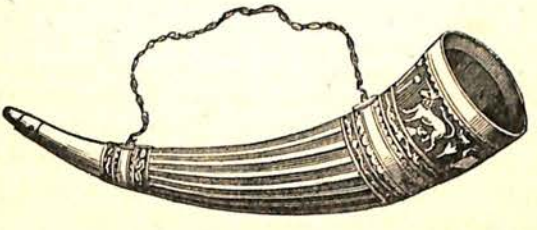
Amidst all the wrongs and tumults that must naturally have arisen out of the most partial admission of the right of personal or family feud, it is remarkable how little we can trace any private violence about inheritance, or the boundaries of landed property. Men were fighting and litigating about stolen cattle, but the tenure of land seems to have been secured upon safe and uniform principles. In the will of Alfred he states that he went to his witan, and showed them King Ethelwulf's his father's will, and they admitted its validity, and guaranteed such settlement of lands as he should think fit to make. But it is probable that such a solemn act of testamentary disposition was only necessary in the case of the king. In the case of private estates the boundaries and the right of succession, or the integrity of purchase, were probably recorded in some legal form. Private land was book-land—land recorded in a written book, or charter. But the transfer of land was effected by a simplicity of arrangement which the ingenuity of civilisation has raised into a complicated and expensive system that makes us look with some regret upon the days before title-deeds. A turf cut from the sward, and handed over to the purchaser by the vendor, was the good old Saxon conveyance of land. The

* Kemble, vol. ii. p. 165.

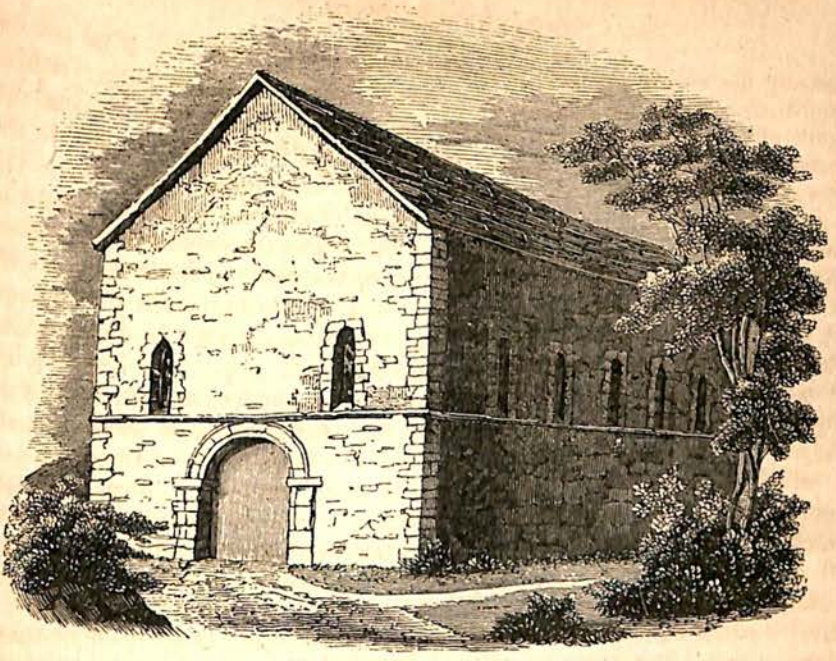
† Have his right by law.

delivering the key of a door gave the possession of a dwelling. More solemn testimonials of the assignment of property were sometimes given. Ulfus, a thane of Northumbria, lays his ivory drinking-horn upon the altar of the minster of York, and there it still remains as the title of the church to the "Terra Ulfi," which the Chapter holds. These formalities took place in the presence of witnesses. Some of the evidence of rightful possession might in course of time be subject to doubt; and bulky and complex documents came at last to stand in the place of the delivery by the turf and the drinking-horn, and the simple registration. The progress of civilisation made the change. But we have carried the change into uncivilisation when we hold that whilst a chattel, be it of the value of thousands of pounds, may be transferred without expense, an acre of freehold land cannot be sold without paying half its value for parchment, and with the possibility that in the next generation the title may become a matter of dispute which the High Court of Chancery may be called upon to settle. The evil is of some standing. Burton, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, writes,—"Our forefathers, as a worthy chorographer of ours (Camden) observes, had wont, with a few golden crosses, and lines in verse, make all conveyances assurances. And such was the candour and integrity of succeeding ages, that a deed, as I have oft seen, to convey a whole manor, was *implicité* contained in some twenty lines, or thereabouts. . . . . But now many skins of parchment will scarce serve turn. He that buys and sells a house must have a house full of writings." *

* Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. 1652, p. 51.



Horn of Ulfus



St. Mary's Chapel at Kingston.

CHAPTER IX.

Edward succeeds Alfred—Ethelfleda—Athelstan—Annexation of Northumbria—Athelstan's continental influence—Battle of Brunan-burh—Code of Athelstan—His Death—Edmund—His Accession and Murder—Dunstan—Accession of Edred—The Church under Edred—His Death—Edwy—His Coronation Feast—Edwy and Elgiva—Edwy's Death.

ALFRED, as we have seen, married at a very early age; and as he was fifty-two when he died, his eldest son, Edward, was probably about thirty when he was called to the throne by the choice of the witan. The chronicle of Ethelward says—"He was elected by the nobles, and crowned with the royal crown on Whitsunday, one hundred years having elapsed since his great grandfather, Egbert, had gained his present territories." At the battle of Faruham, in 893, Edward was at the head of the forces which overtook the Danes, and compelled their retreat from the interior. He was then a father; for Malmesbury records that Alfred was affectionately attached to Athelstan, the son of Edward, and dedicated him, as it were, to war and dominion, by bestowing on the beautiful boy a scarlet cloak, a diamond-studded belt, and a Saxon sword in a golden scabbard. But, chosen as he was by the general voice, and marked out for rule as the companion in arms of his father, Edward found that the title to the throne was contested. In the case of Alfred, the lineal succession was set aside; for his elder brother, Ethelred, had left children. His son, Ethelwold, on the election of Edward, disputed his title; seized upon some royal houses; and finally fled to Northumbria, where the

Danes chose him as supreme king. A civil war now ensued, which lasted, with various fortunes, for four years. But Ethelwold at length fell in a great fight in East Anglia, which he had invaded and laid waste. His death put an end to this unnatural contention; and Edward, the next year, concluded a treaty with the Danes.

King Edward possessed the indomitable vigour of his father, however he might be wanting in those qualities which raised Alfred so high above the mere warrior. There was another of Alfred's children, who had the same energy of character; and who cherished the same resolve to consolidate the realm of England under one dominant authority. That ally of Edward in this difficult labour was his sister, Ethelfleda. She was the wife of Ethelred, the friend of Alfred, who held under him the rule of Merica. He died in 912. His widow was not superseded by an ealdorman, or sub-king. She was "the Lady of Mercia;" and wisely and bravely did she govern. There was perfect accord between the king and the sovereign lady. Ethelfleda erected fortresses to protect her territory, at Bridgenorth, Stamford, Tamworth, Warwick; while Edward fortified Hertford and Witham. These fortresses became the seats of trade, and gradually grew into importance as boroughs. They were of superior construction to the old earth-works; for one of the chroniclers says they were built of stone. It has been observed that there was, "a few years later, a perfectly similar systematical establishment of towns or fortresses in Germany, under the emperor, Henry the First." * Such fortresses are not only indications of a state of warfare; but show, also, that there was an important class of the community growing up, that could no longer safely abide in the small villages; or clustered round the house of the noble, or the church of the bishop. The country was gradually becoming less exclusively agricultural. In the laws of Edward it is enacted that "every man have his warrantor; and that no man buy out of port, but have the port-reeve's witness." This clearly applies to the commerce of towns, where all dealings were to be within the gate. But active as well as defensive warfare was still necessary. In 911, Rollo, the great sea-king, obtained the cession of that duchy of France to which the North-men gave their name. This conquest, from which such great results were to ensue in the lapse of centuries, offered, at first, encouragement to new attacks upon Saxon England. Though the Danish settlers were, for the most part, Christian, their pagan countrymen continued to penetrate into the interior from the coasts of East Anglia and Northumbria; and the old contest, in which the settler and the pirate were united against Wessex and Mercia, was still going on. The Welsh, too, appeared again in revolt. Edward and Ethelfleda were unwearied in their resistance to the powers which assailed them in so many directions; and they were ultimately successful. They became assailants, too, of the territories which had been subdued by the Northmen. The Danes of East Anglia swore allegiance to Edward, who had possessed himself of Colchester, and had repaired the Roman walls; and Ethelfleda compelled the Danish garrisons of Derby and Leicester to surrender, and the Danes of York to submit to her authority. Finally all the island acknowledged the son of Alfred as lord and protector. The heroic lady of Mercia died at Tamworth about the year 920; and Edward died in 924. Their lives were a perpetual struggle,—first to

* Lappenberg, vol. ii. p. 91.

maintain the integrity of their dominions; and, secondly, to establish a more perfect security by their extension. Upon the death of Ethelfleda, Edward annexed Mercia to Wessex, disregarding the claims of her daughter. This was an act of despotism—the expedient policy of Wessex for a century and a quarter. What we call ambition might have been, as far as the individual rulers were concerned, the great sustaining cause of that policy; but, at the same time, it would have been impossible for the country to have made any progress in the establishment of law and of religion, any successful prosecution of the industrial arts, if divided into hostile tribes, under the government of many petty rulers. This struggle for the concentration of authority went on, more or less, under the Germanic kings, for nearly a century and a half after the death of Edward; and was not completed even by the Norman conquest. Whatever was the tyranny of the Norman kings, their preponderating power was ultimately a blessing to England. It crushed the rivalries of turbulent chieftains, and extinguished the hostilities of adverse races, of the British, and Saxon, and Danish stocks. But, mighty as was that power, it never rooted out the Saxon laws and language, or bowed the Saxon spirit into a dishonourable slavery. It is for this cause that the periods of wild wars, and rude enactments, when England was shaping itself into a kingdom, have still an interest for us; and that we cannot properly enter into the broader pathways of modern history without traversing the thickets which encompass them.

Athelstan, the son of Edward, has been held to be illegitimate. The belief is inconsistent with the relation of the attachment of Alfred to his grandson, and of his apparent dedication of him to the kingly office. The early chroniclers have a strange admixture of fancy with fact, the poetic infusion not only reflecting the superstitions of their age, but expressing the traditional reverence of history for its heroes. Thus, the mother of Athelstan, a shepherd's daughter, sees in a dream a glorious moon shining out of her body to light all England. The dream is reported; and the humble maiden becoming the first love of Alfred's son, the moon is Athelstan. Edward named this, his eldest son, as his successor. The next son, Ethelward, died soon after his father. The other sons were under age. Athelstan was crowned at Kingston, in 924.* It appears that his succession, though sanctioned by the witan, met with opposition; and a conspiracy was formed to depose him and put out his eyes. The leader of this sedition is called, by Malmesbury, one Elfred; and the same chronicler quotes a remarkable grant to the Abbey of Malmesbury, by Athelstan, of certain possessions which had accrued to him upon the death of Elfred. In this document the king says, "He was the jealous rival both of my happiness and of my life, and consented to the wickedness of my enemies, who, on my father's decease, had not God in his mercy delivered me, wished to put out my eyes in the city of Winchester." The grant goes on to say, that Elfred was sent to Rome to defend himself by oath before Pope

Silver Coin of Athelstan.

* The ancient chapel at Kingston, in which some of the Saxon kings were held to have been crowned, was standing late in the last century.

John; but at the instant he was sworn he fell down, and died three nights after. As connected with this conspiracy of Elfred, though erroneously so in point of time, tradition has associated the fate of Athelstan's younger brother, Edwin. Seduced into the revolt against the king, he was exposed, say the legends, in a rotten boat, with one attendant, his armour-bearer; and, driven out to sea, without oar or rudder, threw himself overboard in wild despair. The faithful follower of Edwin brought his body to land; and the remorse of Athelstan was only alleviated by seven years' penance. Malmesbury says he found the tale, as he found the dream of the shepherd's daughter, in old ballads. The monkish romancers told a similar story of the wife of Offa; and the same interesting fable will always speak to the heart in the Custance of Chaucer, and the Prospero of Shakspere. Henry of Huntingdon does not receive the story of Malmesbury's old ballad. He says, "By a stroke of adverse fortune, Athelstan lost his brother Edwin, the etheling, a young prince of great energy and high promise, who was unhappily drowned at sea." *

The reign of Athelstan was spread over the short term of fifteen years, but it was the culminating point of the glory and power of Saxon England. "The terror of his name," according to Malmesbury, left him the undisputed dominion of the island, with the exception of Northumbria. The Danish chieftain of that district, Sihtric, acknowledged Athelstan's supremacy and received his sister in marriage. The alliance was soon dissolved. The history which bears the name of Matthew of Westminster records that the Dane, who had embraced Christianity, renounced his wife and his faith at the same time (A.D. 926). Athelstan was preparing to revenge the injury, when Sihtric died, or was murdered. His sons Guthfric and Anlaf fled, when Athelstan led an army into Northumbria. The vigorous Saxon annexed the Northumbrian kingdom to his dominions. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle gives a pithy summary of the events of this year: "And Sihtric perished; and King Athelstan obtained the kingdom of the Northumbrians: And he ruled all the kings who were on this island: first, Huwal, king of the West-Welsh; † and Constantine, king of the Scots; and Uwen, king of the Guentian people; ‡ and Ealdred, son of Ealdulf, of Bamborough; and they confirmed the peace by pledge, and by oaths, at the place called Eamot, on the 4th of the Ides of July; and they renounced all idolatry, and after that submitted to him in peace." Guthfric returned the next year in arms to claim the Northumbrian kingdom; but he was subdued by Athelstan, and, making his submission, was received with kindness. He soon joined the piratical bands of his countrymen.

The power which Athelstan had thus won by his sword, he appears to have retained in peace for about ten years. During this period, and in the few subsequent years of his life, his position as the supreme ruler of a great and independent kingdom gave him an European influence, which appears most remarkable at a time which we are little accustomed to consider as one of international amity. Athelstan was the protector and defender of deposed and exiled princes. When the Normans expelled the Duke of Brittany from

* The Saxon Chronicler gives the date of his death as 933, eight years after Athelstan's accession.

† People of Cornwall.

‡ People of Monmouthshire.

his dominions, Athelstan welcomed and educated his son Alan; who finally drove out the Normans with the Saxon's aid. Haco, the son of the King of Norway, was also welcomed and educated in England, and was assisted by Athelstan in obtaining his throne. Louis IV. of France, in his earlier years, had sought refuge with his maternal uncle, Athelstan, and hence he was called "D'outremer," "from beyond the sea," during the usurpation of Rudolph. Summoned to the throne from his English exile, he was finally protected in his dominion by the English king. The states of France sent deputies to Athelstan, on the death of Rudolph, who took the oath of allegiance to Louis in the presence of Athelstan and his queen; and when the rule of the young Frank was disturbed by his great vassals, another treaty of alliance between the countries was entered into. Daniel, the French historian, has this comment on the event: "This is the first example which we have in our history, not only of an offensive league between France and England, but it is also the first treaty by which these two kingdoms concerned themselves about each other's welfare. Until this event the two nations considered themselves as two worlds, which had no connexion but that of commerce to maintain, and had no interest to cultivate either friendship or enmity in other concerns." * Athelstan had a difficult policy to pursue. Hugh, who married Athelstan's sister, Edgiva (then dead), was one of the great vassals who was opposed to Louis IV.; and the German king, Otho, who had married Elgifa, another sister, had invaded the French dominions. But Athelstan held firmly to the interests of his nephew. The position of England and France at this period was certainly a memorable one. Centuries were to elapse before an alliance could be formed between them as independent nations. The Norman princes ruled England as a province. Their successors claimed France as an inheritance. For nine hundred years since the league with Athelstan, the two nations have, for the most part, "considered themselves as two worlds;" have maintained little "commerce;" have cultivated small "friendship" in external concerns. A common danger and a common interest have produced a mighty change in our days. May the friendship be preserved when the danger is past!

The continental alliances of Athelstan, and especially the marriages of his sisters, are indications of a genius for state-craft, such as we scarcely expect in those times. In the personal character of the Saxon we trace "the pride of kings," and the barbaric pomp of self-asserting power. William of Malmesbury saw the tomb of Athelstan opened, a century and a half after his death; and he describes his flaxen hair "beautifully wreathed with golden threads." The kings who sought his alliance approached him with presents, such as would propitiate his love of magnificent display. Norway sent him a ship with golden beak, and purple sail, and gilded shields. Hugh, the great Duke of the Franks, demanded his sister in marriage, with "presents such as might gratify the most boundless avarice"—perfumes, jewels, diadems, caparisoned horses, the sword of Constantine the Great, and the spear of Charlemagne. There is no distinct record that Athelstan was corrupted by this homage; but it is certain that the extension of his power produced the inevitable consequence that waits upon successful ambition—the confederacy of the weak against the strong. A league against him was formed by the

* Quoted in Turner, book vi. chap. ii.

under-kings of Scotland and Cumberland in 934. Athelstan was prompt in his measures. He marched into Scotland with a great army, and his fleet ravaged the coast as far as Caithness. Anlaf, the son of Guthfric the Dane, had married a daughter of Constantine of Scotland; and the re-establishment of the Northumbrian kingdom was the great object to be attained by the union of all who had felt the power, and were humiliated by the magnificence, of their Saxon lord. The Danes, the Scots, and the Welsh appeared in arms. Anlaf, who had obtained dominion in Ireland and the western isles, with upwards of six hundred ships, entered the Humber. All the North was in insurrection. All the South and East went forth to uphold the integrity of the kingdom. The army of Athelstan was encamped on the Scottish borders of Northumberland, according to Camden. The king commanded, with Edmund his brother; and the chancellor Turketul led the Londoners to the fight. The chroniclers tell the same romantic story, with variations, that they told of Alfred. Anlaf, the Dane, enters the camp of Athelstan as a harper. He plays before the king, and takes a money-reward. But he scorns to retain the price of a hireling's service, and buries the present which he received. A soldier, who had formerly served under Anlaf, knew the supposed harper, and communicated his knowledge to the king, who was indignant that he had not been seized. The honest soldier declared that he should have scorned to betray his former leader, but he warned Athelstan to shift his position. The king followed the timely advice; and when Anlaf attacked the camp at night, he found other victims. Two days after was fought the great battle of Brunan-burh, by which the confederacy against the Saxon power was completely overthrown. Of this decisive conflict Milton says, "They fought with Athelstan at a place called Wendune; others term it Brunanburg, others Bruneford; which Ingulph places beyond Humber; Camden in Glendale of Northumberland, on the Scottish borders—the bloodiest fight, say authors, that ever this island saw. To describe which, the Saxon annalist, wont to be sober and succinct, whether the same or another writer, now labouring under the weight of his argument, and overcharged, runs on a sudden into such extravagant fancies and metaphors as bear him quite beyond the scope of being understood."* It is remarkable that a great poet did not see that the "extravagant fancies and metaphors" were part of "the earliest of the few metrical materials for English history;"† and were of singular value as illustrations of the spirit in which the Saxon ballads were composed. In later times, the ode on the battle of Brunan-burh has moved the heart "more than with a trumpet," as Sidney was moved by "the old song of Percy and Douglas." We present it entire.‡

"Here Athelstan, king, of earls the lord, of beorns § the bracelet-giver, and eke his brother, Edmund Etheling, won life-long glory in battle, with edges of swords, near Brunan-burh.

* History of England, book v. † Mackintosh.

‡ Milton's "History of England" was published in 1670. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was first printed in 1644, with a Latin translation. In that translation the peculiar expressions of the ode are necessarily lost in amplifications and expletives. We can easily understand that the Latin being read to the blind poet, he saw little merit beyond "extravagant fancies and metaphors."

§ Men fierce as bears: beorn is a title of honour, which has been translated "baron."

"They clove the board-wall,* they hewed the war-lindens.† Offspring of Edward they, in battle oft, 'gainst every foe the land defended—its hoards, and its homes. Such was their noble natures, derived from their fathers. The foe they crushed; the Scottish people and the shipmen fated fell.

"The field reek'd with warriors' blood, since the sun was up at morning-tide. The mighty planet, God's candle bright, the eternal Lord's, glided o'er grounds, till the noble creature sank to her settle.‡ There lay many a warrior by javelins strewed; northern men, shot over shields; also Scots, weary and war-sad.

"West-Saxons onwards, in bands, throughout the day, pursued the foot-steps of the loathed nations. They hewed the fugitives behind, amain, with swords mill-sharp. Mercians refused not the hard hand-play to any heroes who, with Anlaf, over the ocean in the ship's bosom, this land sought, fated to the fight.

"Five lay on the battle-stead,§ youthful kings by swords in slumber laid; so seven eke of Anlaf's earls; shipmen and Scots of the army countless.

"There was made to flee the North-men's chieftain; by need constrained to the ship's prow with a little band. The bark drove afloat. The king, out-going on the fallow flood,‖ his life preserved. So there, also, Constantine, hoary warrior, came by flight to his north country. He had no cause to exult in the communion of swords.

"Here was his kindred band of friends o'erthrown on the folk-stead, in battle slain; and his son he left on the slaughter-place, mangled with wounds, young in the fight. He the grizly-haired beorn, the old deceiver, had no cause to boast of the bill-clashing; nor had Anlaf any more, with the remnant of their armies.

"They had no cause to exult that they in war's works the better men were in the battle-stead, at the conflict of banners, the meeting of spears, the concourse of men, the traffic of weapons—that they on the slaughter-field with Edward's offspring played.

"The North-men departed in their nailed barks; bloody relic of darts, o'er the deep water, Dublin to seek,—again to seek Ireland, shamed in mind.

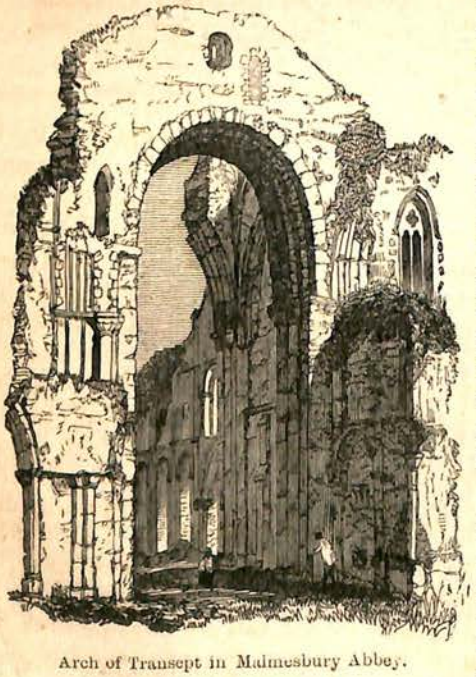
"So too the brothers, both together, king and Etheling, their country sought, the West-Saxons' land, in war exulting.

"They left behind them, the corse to devour, the sallow kite, and the swart raven with horned beak, and the dusky vulture, and the white-tailed heron:—the corse to enjoy came the greedy war-hawk, and the grey beast, the wolf of the wood.

"Carnage greater has not been in this island ever yet, never before this, of people slain by edges of swords. So books us tell; books of old writers: since from the east hither Angles and Saxons came to land,—since o'er the broad seas mighty war-smiths sought Britain, the Welsh overcame, and earls most bold this earth obtained." ¶

* The wooden wall of shields.
† The linden spears.
‡ Setl-gang is sun-setting.
§ Place, homestead.
‖ The term, as applied to land, has reference to colour. So the brown sea.
¶ The translation in the "Monumenta Historica Britannica" is more imbued with the spirit of the original than any with which we are acquainted. The poem, as there presented in the Saxon rhythm, has a corresponding translation line by line; but as no translation can give a metrical notion of the original, we have run it on in paragraphs, making some inversions here and there to aid the reader.

The terrors of that "slaughter-place" left Athelstan in peace for his few remaining years. He promulgated a code of laws, as his father and grandfather had done. They are conceived in a spirit of justice, according to the opinions and manners of the age. In the payment of tithes, the king claims no exemption for his "own goods; both of live stock and of the year's earthly fruits;" and he calls upon his bishops and ealdormen to do the like. He commands his reeves "that ye entirely feed one poor Englishman, if ye have him, or that ye find another;" and that "ye redeem one 'wite-theow' (penal slave)." We understand this to apply to those reeves who had the charge of the king's manors; on which it was probable that there was abundance, and that none, or very few, of the unfree were in the condition of "a poor Englishman." It has been hastily assumed that the whole land was so flourishing, that poverty was not readily to be found. The criminal laws were severe; but they had some discrimination. No thief was to be spared; but his age must exceed twelve years. We do not, now, put children under twelve to death, but we punish them, and then leave them to perish. The bishops and reeves, and guildmen of the City of London ordered that "no thief be spared over twelve pence, and no person over twelve years;" but, with these limitations, they entered into a compact which rendered the escape of the plunderer almost impossible. They formed themselves into an association, common enough even at this day, for the prosecution of felons. Each member of the Guild contributed fourpence a-year for the common use; the money was held by a committee of ten men, who had to decide, "what they shall disburse when aught is to pay, and what they should receive when money should arise to us at our common suit." Our principle of association for public objects, and which could only exist under a condition of individual freedom, may thus be distinctly traced to the modes in which our ancestors defended their property, and asserted their rights, nine hundred years ago.



Arch of Transept in Malmesbury Abbey.

Athelstan died in the year 940, and was buried in the Abbey of Malmesbury. Two sons of his uncle Ethelward had fallen in the battle of Brunan-burh, and the king had ordered them to be interred in the church which he had so richly endowed. What is called the tomb of Athelstan is still shown at Malmesbury. In a visit to this interesting little town we were somewhat surprised to find how the memory of Athelstan still lingers there. Over the antiquarian conviction that the noble ruins of the abbey are Norman, rides the popular belief that the solemn porches and the lofty arches belong to

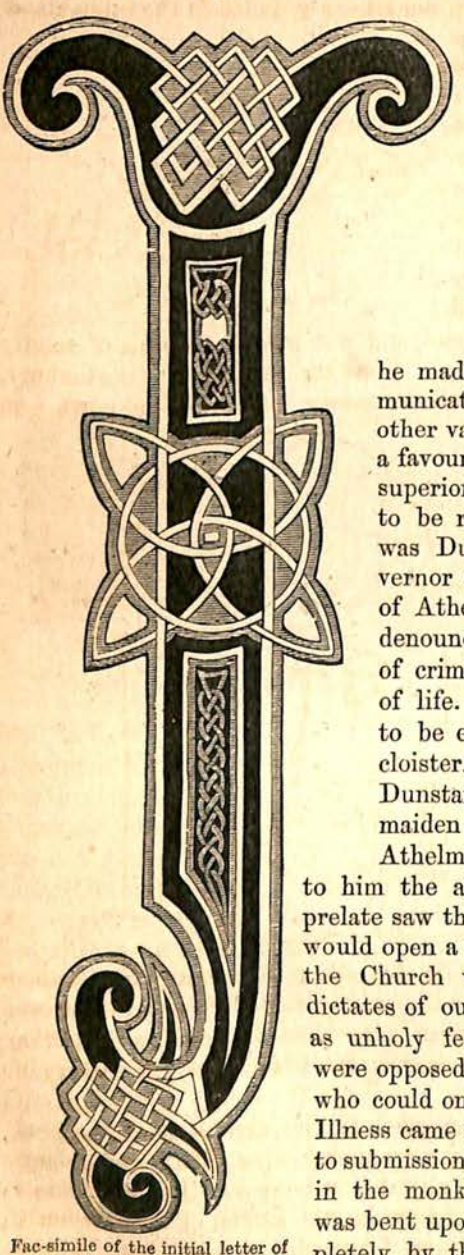
the days of Athelstan. The people have extensive common-rights; and as the peasant-boy drives his herds to the rich pastures watered by the Avon, he thinks of King Athelstan, who granted these rights to his town; in whose school he learnt to read; and whose festival he annually celebrates with confiding merriment. It is the same in other towns. Beverley claimed to send members to parliament under a charter of Athelstan; and many a town in the west of England had a statue of the great Saxon king. Some of the manuscripts of his library were preserved at Bath, up to the period of the Reformation; and the copy of the Gospels, in Latin, which he presented to the Cathedral of Canterbury, may still be seen in the British Museum. He encouraged the translation of the Bible into Saxon, as Alfred had done before him.

Tomb in Malmesbury Abbey.

According to the chroniclers, Edmund the Etheling, who had fought at Brunan-burh, was only eighteen when he came to the crown. This appears somewhat unlikely. During his short reign of about six years he was twice married. But the removal of the vigorous Athelstan was the signal of fresh troubles. Anlaf was called from Ireland, and set up by the Northumbrians as their king. He concluded a successful treaty with Edmund, but soon after died. His son could not uphold the power; and the district was again reduced under the dominion of the King of Wessex. Edmund had also subdued the Britons of Cumbria; and had granted their lands to Malcolm of Scotland, under the condition of military service. The alleged right of the Scottish kings to "the earldom of Cumberland" was founded upon Edmund's grant. The extent of the homage thus claimed of the kings of the Scots by the kings of the English has been a perpetual dispute amongst that class of antiquaries who rejoice to learn what Time has forgotten, which Time revenges by forgetting what they have learned.* It is not for us to examine into the evidence afforded by these exhumations. The young warrior-king did not long enjoy his peace, or enforce his fealty. The circumstances of his death, in the year 946, exhibit a scene of Saxon manners which proves how strongly the old disposition to employ physical force still prevailed. The king is celebrating the festival of Saint Augustin, in his hall at Pucklechurch in Gloucestershire. An outlaw whom he had banished dares to take his seat amongst the guests. The wine-cup goes round; but Edmund discovers the intruder, and commands his removal. Upon the man's resistance, the enraged prince rushes at him; seizes him by the hair, and dashes him to the ground. At the same instant the outlaw draws a dagger, and plunges it into the

* The point of the well-known epigram upon Thomas Hearne.

breast of the ill-fated Edmund. The king instantly died; and the assassin was cut to pieces by the beholders of the sudden affray.

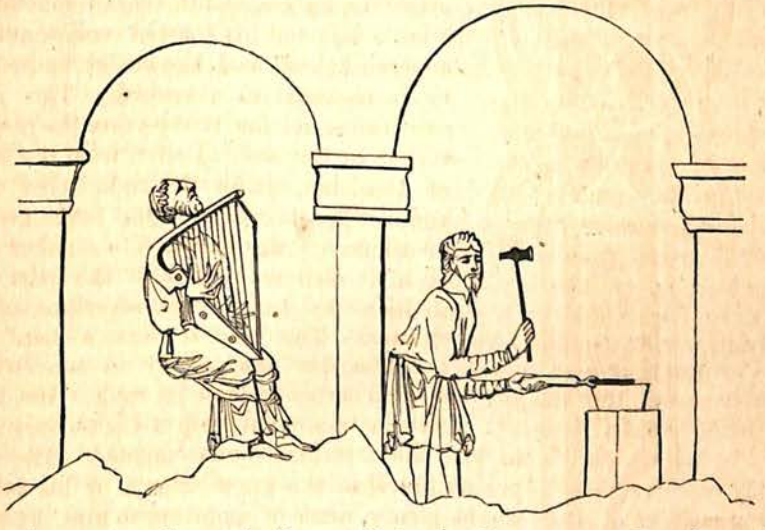


Fac-simile of the initial letter of the 1st chapter of John in Athelstan's Gospels.

It is half a century since Alfred established the Saxon kingdom. His son and his grandson have valiantly fought to uphold it. A rule of another character, more mighty than the sword, is growing into form. It has humble beginnings. At the court of Athelstan was a precocious youth of a noble race, who had been educated at the monastery of Glastonbury. His acquirements were far above those of his time; and he made pretensions to supernatural communications. His musical skill, and his other various accomplishments, rendered him a favourite; but his boasted visions, and his superior talents and knowledge, caused him to be regarded as a sorcerer. This youth was Dunstan; for thirty years the real governor of England. Driven from the favour of Athelstan, under the rude belief which denounced arts called magical as the greatest of crimes, he was forced into another mode of life. The seductions of the court were to be exchanged for the severities of the cloister. The contest was a hard one. Dunstan was passionately in love with a maiden suited to him in rank. His uncle Athelm was Archbishop of Canterbury; and to him the attachment was confided. The stern prelate saw that the great talents of his relative would open a career of ambition to him, by which the Church would be powerfully upheld. The dictates of our common nature were represented as unholy feelings. Threats and blandishments were opposed to the strong will of the young man, who could only see misery in the monastic system. Illness came; and the enfeebled mind was bowed to submission. Then Dunstan renounced the world, in the monkish sense of renunciation. But he was bent upon subduing the world far more completely by the cowl than by the spear. In the ardour which some call insanity, and others genius, he spurned the tame privations of the ordinary cell; and by the side of the church of Glastonbury he lived in a wretched hut, or cave, in which he could not stand upright. As his groans under the self-inflicted scourge broke the midnight silence, the rumour went forth that he was struggling with the evil one.

The saintly monk soon had votaries. A noble lady poured her fortune into his lap. Crowds came to gaze upon him when he emerged from his den to do the service of the altar. His harp sometimes sounded in the intervals of his prayers and penances; and the tap of his hammer at his forge showed that he was engaged in some smith's work of utility or ornament. Out of that miserable hut came the sagacious ruler of two kings, and the tyrannous oppressor of a third. Under Edmund, Dunstan was simple Abbot of Glastonbury. It was a proud step over the heads of his brethren, who held their easy way, untempted by any fiend, and not at all covetous of saintly honours through bodily mortifications. But the Abbot of Glastonbury, with all his chartered power—"as well in causes known as unknown,—in

St. Dunstan. Royal MS.



small as in great, and even in those which are above and under the earth,—on dry land and on the water; on woods and on plains;" *—this Abbot was a humble man, compared with the greatness to which a boundless ambition might aspire. The narrative of his career is, for some time, the history of England.

Edred, the brother of Edmund, succeeded to the throne, after the fatal blow of the outlaw. Edmund left two very young sons, Edwy and Edgar. Edred was of feeble constitution and of a confiding temper. His first adviser was the Chancellor Turketul, who had fought at the battle of Brunan-burh. In a few years the statesman devoted himself to religion, and became Abbot of Croyland. He appears to have been a just, as well as a brave man; for before his resignation of his civil office, he proclaimed to the citizens of London that he was anxious to leave no debt undischarged, and to make threefold reparation to any person who had sustained injury at his hands

* These words are in the charter to Dunstan, as given in William of Malmesbury.

Dunstan now became the chief director of the public affairs of the country. He was, in the words of one of his biographers, "*Rex et Regis Imperator*," King and ruler of the King. He was the keeper of his treasures. He was, most probably, the director of his wars. During this reign, Northumbria, which had revolted, was finally subdued; and Edred, having devastated the land, changed its form of government, and reduced it from a kingdom to an earldom. The sickly king styled himself the sovereign of "the fourfold empire of the Anglo-Saxons, and Northumbrians, Pagans, and Britons." From this title we learn that some of the dominions were held under Danish chieftains, who were still unconverted, and were denominated Pagans. Edred died in 956.

The great Abbot of Glastonbury is stated to have refused the see of Winchester, which was offered to him by Edred. His domination was perhaps better secured by his comparatively humble position. He was planning a real revolution—the establishment of the monastic rule in England, and the concurrent supremacy of the papal power. The celibacy of the clergy was the leading principle to be contended for, in making the Church Romish instead of national. Although the strict canons of the Anglo-Church did not recognise a married priesthood, the law of celibacy had never been rigidly enforced, especially amongst the parochial clergy. Their marriages were discountenanced; they were admonished or threatened. But the law of nature was triumphant over the decrees of councils; and the English priests were not forced into those immoralities which were the result of this ordinance in other countries. Mr. Kemble says, "we have an almost unbroken chain of evidence to show that, in spite of the exhortations of the bishops, and the legislation of the witans, those at least of the clergy who were not bound to a cœnobitical order did contract marriage, and openly avow the families which were its issue."* The monastic establishments of England were numerous before the time of Dunstan. But it is tolerably certain that the monks were not subjected to the very strict rule of their founder Saint Benedict. The conventual churches were, in many cases, served by what we call seculars. These priests lived in detached houses; and we may conceive that they, sometimes, were not patterns of self-denial. It was the mission of Dunstan to reform what he considered, and perhaps in many cases justly, as abuses. In some respects his character has been subjected to unnecessary odium, through the coarse appreciation of his monkish admirers, who have held him up as the saintly instrument of the divine judgments against the most wicked of mankind. During his long administration he raised the power of the regulars, or monks, to an unprecedented height; and the extravagant chroniclers, who looked back with ignorant admiration upon what he, and his coadjutors, had done for their order, have caused historians to regard him, whom Milton calls "a strenuous bishop," as a dangerous impostor and a tyrannous fanatic. In modern times, his actions have been examined with much uncandid criticism, whether adulatory or deprecatory. We believe that, however unscrupulous in the exercise of his strong will, he laboured with an honest purpose for the elevation of the Church; but that in his exclusive devotion to that object, he brought about the ruin and degradation of the kingdom.

* Saxons in England, vol. ii. p. 443.

Edwy, called the Fair, succeeded to the crown of his uncle by the voice of the witan. The boy-king, who was sixteen, or at most eighteen, years of age at his accession, has been stigmatised by the monastic writers as the most weak, profligate, and tyrannous of unwise rulers. Henry of Huntingdon, supported by others who had not the prejudices of the cloister, says, "This king wore the diadem not unworthily; but after a prosperous and becoming commencement of his reign, its happy promise was cut short by a premature death." In the destruction of that happy promise, and in that premature death, we have a tragedy over which many eyes have wept. The participation of Dunstan in that tragedy has made his name hateful with all by whom the piteous tale of "Edwy and Elgiva" has been received with undoubting faith. Disputed as the popular belief has been by polemical writers, the poetical aspect of the story will always supersede the fanatical. The one is natural and consistent; the other is unnatural and disingenuous. Nor is the evidence, taken altogether, insufficient to rebut the calumnies with which the lives of these poor victims of an unscrupulous policy have been overshadowed. We have carefully examined that evidence, and we shall tell the story as we collect it out of many contradictory narratives, most of them defiled by the prurient scandals of those who, in blackening Edwy and his beloved one, endeavour to justify their oppressors.*

The coronation of the young king followed quickly after his accession. His witan had taken the oath of allegiance to him, and before the altar he had himself taken the oath to his subjects. The coronation feast succeeds. The king sits at the banquet surrounded by timid friends, and suspicious enemies. He has taken the oath that he will hold God's Church, and all the Christian people of his realm, in true peace.† But at that banquet there are ministers of God's Church who bear towards each other the most deadly hostility. "He despised the advice of his counsellors," says Malmesbury. The counsellors that he found in possession of power, were Dunstan and his friends, the leaders of one great party. Edwy, who is accused with having considered Edred an usurper, fell into the hands of the leaders of another party. At this coronation feast the king retired early. As was the invariable custom at these Saxon banquets, there was excessive use of wine, and the passions of men were proportionately excited. The assembly murmured, with some reason, at the absence of the king. Dunstan and another went forth; and bursting into Edwy's private chamber, found him in the company of Elgiva and her mother Ethelgiva. The abbot seized the youth, and forcibly dragged him back to the hall. It has been called an act of sudden passion. To us it appears an act of the most profound policy. The authority of the monk was tottering; and he, for this reason, asserted his power before the assembled people. Dr. Lingard says of Dunstan, "As the treasurer of Edred, and the executor of his last testament, he had disappointed the rapacity of the prince." That rapacity consisted in demanding from the abbot of Glastonbury an account of his stewardship. "The king all along had entertained suspicions of

* Those who are curious to inform themselves upon the controverted points of these passages of history should, after reading Dr. Lingard's statements in his "History of England," and "Antiquities of the Anglo-Church," refer to Mr. Allen's articles in the Edinburgh Review, vols. xxv. and xlii.

† See the oath administered to Ethelbert, in Kemble's "Saxons in England," vol. ii. p. 36.

Dunstan, because he had been entrusted with the custody of the royal treasures." * Labouring under suspicion—perhaps reproached at that coronation feast, where even bishops might be inebriated without offence to public opinion,—the bold minister of Edred seized upon a slight violation of propriety on the part of Edwy, to insult and degrade him. Dunstan was banished; and the king threw himself into the hands of the party who were opposed to the great abbot's authority. He chose his side, perhaps, indiscreetly. A strong party of the aristocracy, a fanatical and, therefore, influential party of the clergy, combined against him. In such contests there is little moderation; and Christian charity is trodden under foot by what is called Christian zeal. Edwy's new counsellors advised strong measures against their opponents; and their opponents revenged themselves by loading the king and his female friends with obloquy, such as Tacitus more justly bestowed upon the frightful profligacy of his time. Edwy met the scandal as alone it could be met. Elgiva became his wife. No monkish abuse can rail away the fact, that in a document of undoubted authority—an agreement for the exchange of lands between Bishop Byrhthelm and Abbot Ethelwold,—the following entry appears:—"And this was by leave of King Eadwig; and these are the witnesses: Ælfgyfu, the king's wife, and Æthelgyfu, the king's wife's mother; Bishop Ælfsige, Bishop Oswulf, Bishop Coenwald; Byrhthnoth, the ealdorman; Ælfheah, the King's dapifer; Eadric, his brother." † Mr. Kemble says, "This, then, was not a thing done in a corner, and the testimony is conclusive that Ælgyfu was Eadwig's queen."

The imputations against Elgiva thus signally failed. But there was something more terrible in reserve than the dirt which Dunstan and his adherents threw at her and her mother. A plot was got up to separate the young queen from her husband, under the plea that the marriage was within the forbidden degrees. They were "to gesybbe,"—too nearly related. There was no solemn act of separation. Upon the banishment of Dunstan, there was soon a revolt against the authority of Edwy. Odo, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was a Dane. His influence in Northumbria was very great, and he instigated a general rising in that old settlement of the Danes. In a very short time, Edwy had to divide his dominion with his brother Edgar, who was set up, not as a sub-ruler, but as a sole king. The rebellious subject came to Edwy and his queen with the terrible powers of the Church. Their marriage had been acquiesced in by prelates and nobles. Their consanguinity was probably of the slightest kind. But Odo was resolved to exercise his tyranny; as it was long exercised by ambitious popes and rapacious prelates, who would tear loving hearts asunder, or give them dispensation, as best suited their cold and calculating natures. Odo knew how to destroy Edwy through his affections, and thus remove the great obstacle to the projects of the monastic leaders. He dragged Elgiva from her husband. There is here some confusion in the narrative of the sad sequel of the violence. A lady was forcibly sent to Ireland, after being disfigured by hot searing irons; she escaped back to England; was seized by the adherents of the party opposed

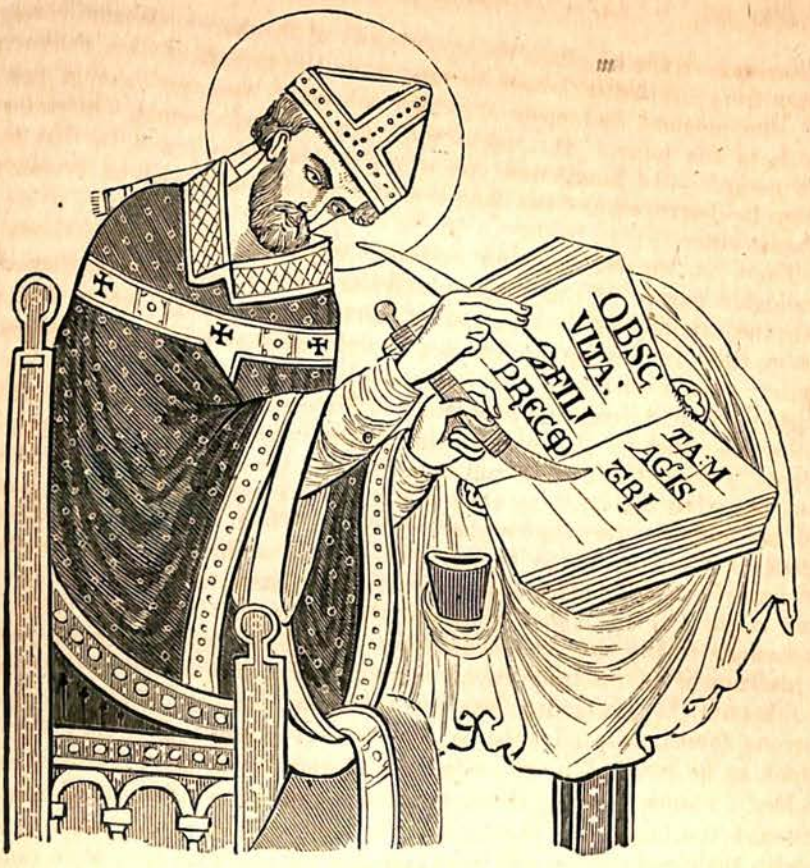
* Lingard: "History." Third edition. This note, from Wallingford, was subsequently omitted, after Mr. Allen had pointed out that Wallingford says, that on account of that suspicion the property of Dunstan was sequestered.

† The document occurs in two manuscripts in the British Museum. See Kemble, vol. ii. p. 410.

to Edwy, and was put to a cruel death. It is pretended that the victim was the mistress and not the wife of Edwy; and that the mistress was Ethelgiva. Dr. Lingard has constructed his narrative of these events upon a principle which exhibits little of the impartiality of the historian's office, and his cold notice of the crimes of the churchmen is scarcely indicative of the humanity of a Christian. "At Gloucester, she (Ethelgiva) fell into the hands of the pursuers, who with their swords divided the sinews of her legs, a cruel but *not unusual mode of punishment in that age.* After lingering in great torments for a few days, she expired." We may believe, if the apologists of Odo so desire it, that two crimes were committed,—that the mother of the queen was hamstrung; and that the Queen met some unknown death in forced seclusion. Of Elgiva we hear no more. The lady who died under "the not unusual mode of punishment," met her fate at Gloucester. There, also, died Edwy, after a reign of four years. Whether he was murdered, or whether he died of a broken heart, we are not satisfactorily informed. It is sufficient for the monastic chroniclers to date the triumph of the Benedictine order in England from the "miserable end," as they honestly call it, of him whom they designate as "the wanton youth." We believe with Mr. Henry Taylor, that "the success of the monastic faction in decrying him with the people was not so complete as the merely political events of his reign might lead us to suppose;" and that "his name ('Eadwig') having been supplanted by its diminutive 'Edwy,' seems to indicate a sentiment of tenderness and pity as popularly connected with him from the first." *

* Preface to the beautiful historical drama of "Edwin the Fair."

A Benedictine



Portrait of St. Dunstan.

CHAPTER X.

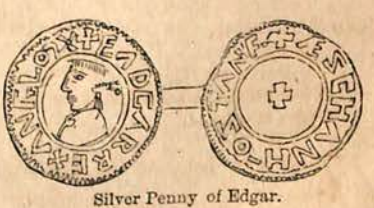
Dunstan; attribution to him of miraculous powers.—His elevation to the primacy.—State of the Anglo-Church.—Cathedrals and Churches.—Provision for the Clergy.—The parish-priest.—Dunstan's reforms.—Edgar.—Extravagant praise of his reign.—His licentiousness and ostentation.—Edgar an instrument in the hands of Dunstan.—Edward; his accession and murder.

It is the duty of the historian, however difficult it may be, to endeavour to represent actions "in sequence, as they *were;* not in the lump as they are thrown down before us." We use Mr. Carlyle's words when he points out the error, with regard to such men as Cromwell, of "substituting the goal of their career for the course and starting-point of it."* For this reason, whatever might have been the early schemes of ambition floating in the mind of Dunstan, we make no attempt to show that it was a consistent plan of his life to degrade a king, to embitter his existence, to hunt him to the death. But men of Dunstan's vigour of character seize upon accidents to shape their speculations into deeds which shall determine all subsequent action. The

* "Heroes and Hero-worship."

indiscretion of the king was the opportunity of the monk. When he dragged Edwy from the ladies' bower to encounter the tumult of the banqueting-hall, the moment had come at which the crafty 'ingener' should put the match to the mine. He risked the chance that he might "hoist on his own petar." He humiliated one who was his enemy; and in that humiliation he destroyed half the danger of the contest into which he foresaw that he must enter.

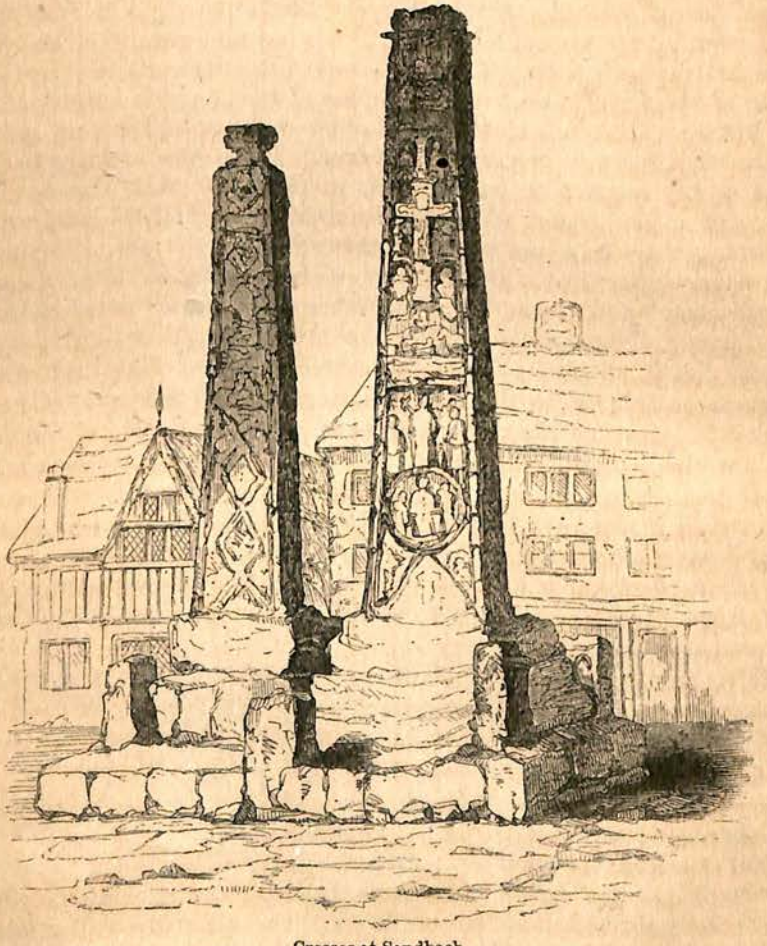
There is, we conceive, no evidence which more distinctly shows the formidable nature of this contest, and the mode in which it was carried on, than the attribution to Dunstan of miraculous powers. Abbot first, then bishop, then archbishop, he was not to fight against married presbyters and secular canons with the simple weapons of his strong will and his vast ability; but all terrors and seductions of superstition were to be called in, to hallow his cause in the eyes of the people, whether earls or churls. The records of these things were not inventions of the monastic writers after his time, but were delivered to them upon the evidence of Dunstan's disciples and his contemporary biographer Osberne. There was nothing too extravagant or too impious to be narrated, which might raise Dunstan to the position of an idol, before whom the ignorant Saxon and the half-converted Dane might fall down and prostrate themselves in slavish adoration. His temptations in the cave at Glastonbury, when he assaulted the evil one with the instrument of his trade (even as Luther did with his great instrument, the inkstand), by tweaking him by the nose with his red-hot tongs, are ludicrous fables, adapted only to the coarsest minds. But they awed the peasant as he listened to the wondrous stories in his smoky hovel; and he trembled to know that the triumphant enemy of the devil and of the married priest was the highest in the land. The noble ladies, as they sat round the fire with their embroidery and their spindles, rejoiced that they were not such as the wicked Elgiva; and that they lived at a time so favoured by Heaven as to send down the holy dove to light upon the head of the great archbishop when he was performing his first mass. The fierce ealdorman hung up his armour when Edgar became king, for he was solemnly told that at Edgar's birth Dunstan heard an angelic voice saying, "Peace to England so long as this child shall reign and our Dunstan survives." Armed with these instruments of imposture, in addition to his own commanding ability—despising probably, in his inmost heart, the artifices of his partisans, but tolerating them as necessary means for the accomplishment of an important end—Dunstan was indisputable governor of the country through the reign of Edgar. The king was still a mere boy when Edwy was removed. He was only thirteen when the land was divided between him and his brother. Dunstan had then returned from his exile, and there was no formidable barrier to his highest exaltation. He first became bishop of Worcester. He was then allowed to hold the see of London at the same time with Worcester. Men of great talent and learning were his devoted supporters. Odo, the fierce primate, in consecrating him to Worcester, named him as archbishop of Canterbury, as if electing his own



Silver Penny of Edgar.

successor; and averred that he so spoke under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. Upon the death of Odo, which happened within two years of that of Edwy, whom Odo had truly murdered, Dunstan accomplished the audacious anticipation.

To understand the position of the Anglo-Church at this remarkable period—a period which carried its influence onward through five centuries—we must look back, very briefly, upon its past history. The first ecclesiastical establishments were of the monastic character. Certain brethren, with a head or bishop, were planted in populous places, and lands were assigned to them for their support. From these houses were teachers sent forth to collect the people, for prayer and for exhortation, around holy crosses,* or in convenient

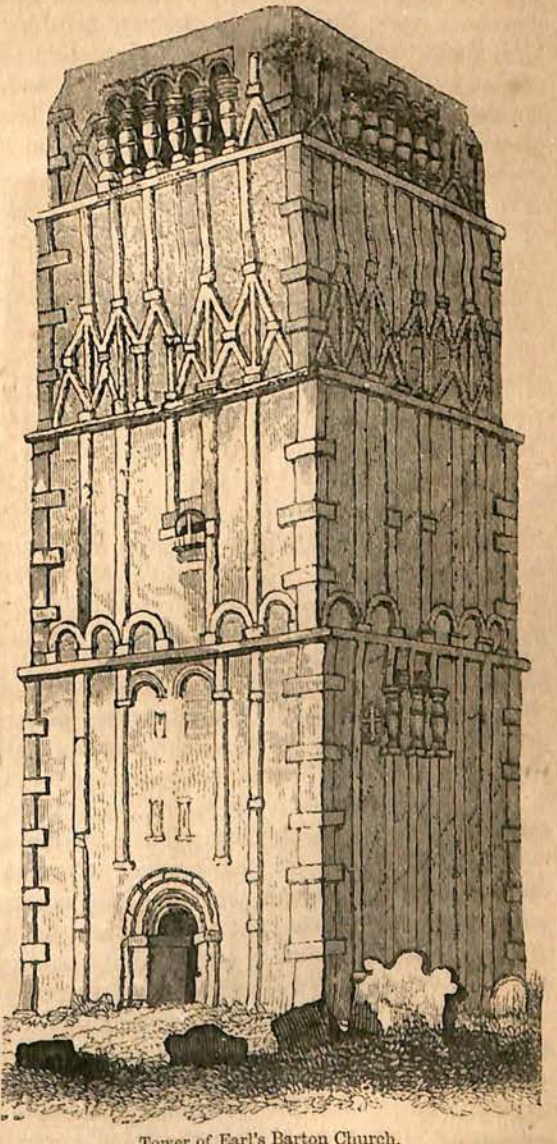


Crosses at Sandbach.

buildings. Sometimes these buildings were the temples of rough stones where the Saxons had worshipped Thor and Woden within the sacred boundary of a settled district. As the increase and spread of the population became a consequence of the progressive cultivation of the land, the going

* The existing crosses at Sandbach, in Cheshire, are held to belong to the first age of Christianity in England.

forth from the monastery of ministers of religion into surrounding districts became inconvenient; and churches were planted, where a daily service was performed by a resident priest. These, too, had lands assigned for their support. In course of time the piety of kings, and nobles, and rich franklins, raised up numerous endowed churches throughout the land; whilst the collegiate establishments, with bishops at their head, increased in proportion. Of the Saxon cathedrals there are no remains which can give us an adequate notion of plan or decoration. There is, however a description of the cathedral of Canterbury by Edmer, the singer, before it was rebuilt in 1070; which shows that "it was a double apse cathedral, like those of Germany, with lateral entrances, one on the north, the other on the south side. Behind the eastern apse was a circular baptistery erected by Cuthbert, the eleventh archbishop." This was for the following purposes, according to Edmer: "that baptisms might be celebrated therein; that certain judicial trials that were formerly carried on in the church might be held there; and lastly, that the bodies of the archbishops might therein be buried, thus departing from the ordinary ancient custom of burial beyond the walls of the city."* There are many fragments of Saxon churches —a tower, a portion of wall, a door, a window; but amidst some controversy, the general belief is, that there is no complete church which can be satisfactorily ascribed to the period before the conquest. The plain round arches which divide the nave from the aisles of St. Michael's



Tower of Earl's Barton Church.

* See Mr. Ferguson's beautiful "Illustrated Handbook of Architecture," vol. ii. p. 844.

Church, at St. Albans, are pronounced to be Saxon. The tower of Earl's Barton, in Northamptonshire, is held to be undoubtedly Saxon; and it has very remarkable characteristics of the Saxon style. We have also the pictorial representation of a Saxon church, in a miniature accompanying a Pontifical in the Public Library at Rouen; which represents the ceremony of dedication.

The form of the church is very curious; and, although the perspective, and the proportions of parts, are altogether false, we see that the towers, the ornamental iron-work of the door, and the cock on the steeple, were much the same, eight or nine hundred years ago, as in recent times.*

The clergy were amply provided for. Tithe, at first a free gift, became established as a right by law. There is unquestionable evidence, however, that the tenth part of the produce was not wholly appropriated to the undivided uses of the churchmen, and the repairs of the church; but that the poor were to be assisted out of the tithe; not as a matter of compassion, but as having a direct claim to one-third of the amount collected. The principle was insisted upon by the ecclesiastical rulers in the seventh century; and it was adopted into the secular law early in the eleventh century, in the reign of Ethelred: "And concerning tithe, the king and his witan have chosen and said, as right it is, that the third part of the tithe which belongs to the Church shall go to the reparation of the church, and a second part to the servants of God, and a third part to God's poor and needy men in thraldom."† But what we now call the voluntary principle entered very largely into the means of the Saxon clergy, in addition to their tithes and their glebe. The oblations of the laity were abundant; and there were other modes of com-

* There is an interesting description of this MS. in "Archæologia," vol. xxv.

† Kemble: "Saxons in England," book ii. chap. 11.

manding an ample revenue, such as commutations for penance, which appear not quite so honourable to the recipients. But whatever might be the avidity for worldly advantages, either in the conventual establishments or amongst the parish priests, we cannot doubt that without their ministrations the whole fabric of Anglo-Saxon society would have fallen into primitive barbarism. However deplorable were the corruptions of the Church, at any era, between the departure of the Roman, and the coming of the Norman, there was the pure light of the Christian doctrine always shining through the darkness. We may well believe that amongst the vast number of presbyters residing in their own parishes, but under the control of the bishops through their deans, there were many who commanded more sincere respect by their domestic virtues, than the monks could command by their ascetic seclusion. The married priest, surrounded by the cultivators of his parish, was himself a cultivator. He was their spiritual adviser, but he was also their sympathising friend. If they rejoiced when "the Lord crowneth the year with his goodness"—if they wept when the pestilence that walketh unseen came upon them—they rejoiced and they wept together. The servant of the altar did not live apart from the tiller of the earth. The poor did not receive their alms at the gate of the abbey from the stern cellarer, when there was a parish priest nigher to their wants. He was of his neighbours' families, and they of his. His children went out with their children to gather the May blossom, and to bring in the Christmas evergreen for his church. His wife knew the sorrows and the joys of their wives. This state of things Dunstan came to break down. The priest was unskilled in the accomplishments of the cloister. Dunstan would supplant him with one that could paint breviaries, and knew the precise intonation of the Gregorian chaunt. The priest was attached to his home and his village. Dunstan would thrust him forth to make room for one who had no affections but for the discipline which had been newly brought from the Abbey of Fleury. The priest had national feelings, and venerated the zeal of Augustin and the wisdom of Alfred. He should have no country but the church, and no veneration but for Dunstan and the sovereign pontiff. It was the first great battle for a dominant ecclesiastical power in England. That battle has been fought over and over again; but the assailants of religious liberty, however triumphant for a time, never broke down the eternal principles of right which were opposed to their pretensions.

But it would be unjust and uncharitable to affirm that, in disturbing the long-established influence of the seculars in the conventual churches, and of the married priests in their rural parishes, Dunstan and his intruments had no great public good in view. Coming from such a hater of episcopacy as Milton, it is startling to find him saying of Dunstan that he was "a strenuous bishop, zealous without dread of person, and, for aught appears, the best of many ages, if he busied not himself too much in secular affairs." Milton was too well read in our early history not to know that the bishop was an essential administrator of "secular affairs;" and that his superior knowledge necessarily made him a superior administrator to the ealdorman or sheriff. The administration of Dunstan kept the country free from external attacks, and from domestic disturbance, during the reign of Edgar. But, probably from an honest conviction of the absence of all the higher qualities, except courage, in the ranks of thanes, and of the general disposition to sensual

pleasures in the mass of the population, he sought to establish an order that, set apart from the world, should afford models of piety and self-denial. He relied too much on the influences of a body of religious and learned men separated from the people. In the seclusion of the monastery, according to his views, there would be assemblies of earnest devotees, striving for no personal advantages, but wholly dedicated to the welfare of their communities. In their quiet retreats they would furnish examples of the purest lives. They would dedicate the hours spared from the service of religion to the pursuits of learning and the arts. They would preserve a knowledge of the language in which Rome spoke to the whole Christian world. They would multiply copies of the Scriptures in that language, and be the recorders of their country's history, in the same universal tongue. They would be the artists of their time—the architects and the painters. Many industrious and holy men, no doubt, were found in these communities; and many of these things they did, and did them well. To them we owe the greater part of our knowledge of our past history, imperfect and prejudiced as are many of their relations. Their architecture has, to a great extent, perished; but their successful cultivation of the arts of design may still be seen in many a manuscript of their undoubted work. The contemporary of Dunstan, Ethelwold, is called the "father of monks." He left a wonderful specimen of what the monkish artists could do, in his "Benedictional."* But all these accomplishments were not for the people; and they could produce little influence upon the people. The monks handed the torch of knowledge from one to another, as they ran their course. But that was no light to illuminate a nation. Bishop Ethelwold ejected the secular priests from Winchester, and rebuilt the cathedral; and he established monks in every part of England, as his panegyrists record. Oswald drove away all the clerks "who preferred their wives to the church." In this process it is difficult to imagine that the people, whom the seculars and clerks had taught, were getting wiser or better; or that the monks, with public and private property heaped upon them, were not destroying "the bones," whilst they took "the flesh and fat" of the realm.†

The reign of Edgar was a reign of sixteen years of peace. With the exception of an invasion of Wales, to enforce the payment of tribute, he carried on no war in this island. The country, too, was unmolested by the rovers of the Baltic. The great settlements which the North-men had effected were sufficient to absorb, for a little while, all the restless spirits who still remained in the condition of lawless adventurers. Edgar had been educated under the care of a Dane; and he had been raised to the throne by the Danish population. Amongst these he naturally found partisans instead of rebels. They looked upon the sweeping ecclesiastical changes of his reign with less suspicion than the people of the Saxon provinces; for their Christianity was comparatively new, and they were as ready to receive a clergy of monks as a

* This manuscript of the tenth century is in the library of the Duke of Devonshire. The book is described in the 24th volume of the "Archæologia," with thirty beautiful engravings of the wonderful miniatures with which this remarkable volume is adorned. The wood-cut we give is copied from one of these.

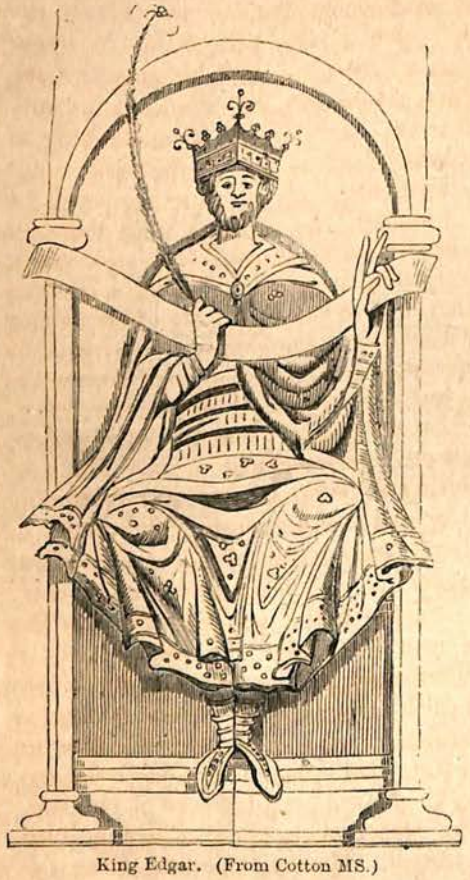
† "Indeed one may safely affirm that the multitude of monasteries invited the invasion, and facilitated the conquest, of the Danes over England, because England had at this time more flesh or fat than bones, wherein the strength of a body consists—more monks than military men." Fuller: "Church History."

clergy of seculars. But out of this peace of sixteen years were to come fearful wars and bitter humiliations. The great Saxon heart was to be held in subjection to the Danish preponderance, which had been unnaturally fostered by Dunstan for party purposes. In his hands the king was a mere

From St. Ethelwold's Benedictional. Illumination V.

pageant. There is nothing more repulsive than the extravagant praises which the monastic writers have bestowed upon this licentious and ostentatious puppet of a bold and sagacious minister. Whenever we can distinctly see Edgar himself, we find a selfish, arrogant, and cruel prince. To us it is of little consequence that a monkish chronicler tells us "that no king, either of his own, or of

former times in England, could be justly and fairly compared to Edgar." * We trace the absurd praise to its source, when the same writer records that "scarcely does a year elapse in the Chronicles in which he did not build some new monastery." But it is important that, even with regard to such a poor atom of past humanity, the great distinctions of right and wrong should not be confounded. The stories which even his panegyrists record of his private actions, and the attributes which they assign to him of regal pomp, would seem rather to belong to a luxurious age of monarchical despotism, than to that of a limited Saxon king. Edgar,—of whom it is written, "He reared up God's honour, he loved God's law, he preserved the people's peace, the best of all the kings that were before in the memory of man,"† —is recorded, in the same pages, to have murdered his friend and foster-brother, that he might marry his widow; and to have torn a nun from her convent to be the victim of his gross appetites. The story of Elfrida was a popular one in Malmesbury's time; and it will hold a place in history, for it belongs to the romance of history. The king heard of the lady's beauty, and he sent his favourite, Athelwold, to report to him if the universal praise was true, of one who lived in seclusion from the court. Athelwold became violently in love with the lady; and upon his return concealed from the king the impression which her charms had made upon himself; spoke disparagingly of her attractions; and subsequently married her. The truth came to the knowledge of the luxurious king; and he announced to his thane that he would visit him and his bride. The terrified Athelwold exhorted his wife to exhibit herself as a slattern, and to conceal her fascinations under a coarse deportment. The ambitious woman had another policy. She put on her gayest adornings and her most encouraging smiles. Edgar and Elfrida came to a perfect understanding. Athelwold was run through by the king with a javelin, when hunting with him. Elfrida became Edgar's queen. To make up the complete picture, Malmesbury records that Edgar extended his protection to an illegitimate son of Athelwold, because the youth, being asked by his royal master how he liked the sport in which his father fell, replied, "I ought not to be displeased with that which gives you pleasure." The duplicity of Athelwold, the profligate ambition of Elfrida,



King Edgar. (From Cotton MS.)

* Malmesbury, book ii. chap. viii. † Quoted in Lingard from the Saxon Chronicle.

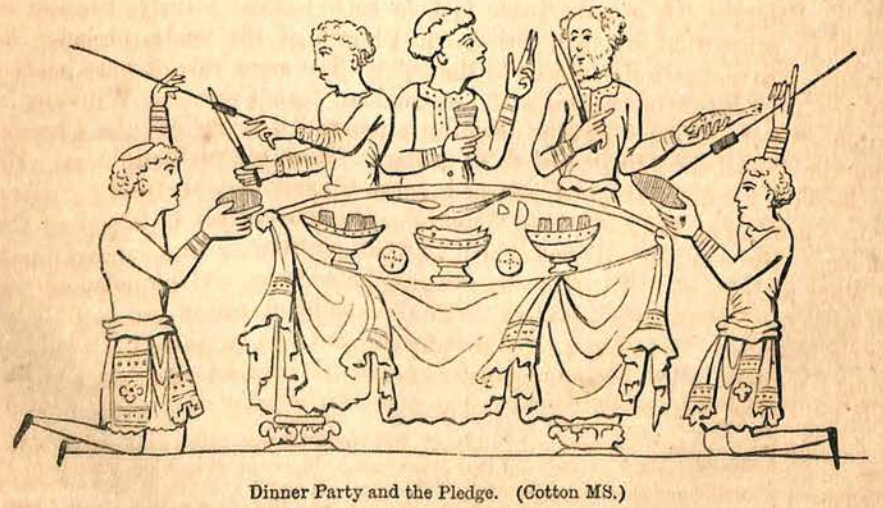
the ferocity of Edgar, and the dastardly coldness of the sycophantic boy, exhibit a state of morals which is not favourable to the cultivation of Saxon sympathies.

To cover the memory of Edgar's crimes we are summoned by his admirers to gaze upon his pomp. Of the most diminutive body, he would challenge any person, however great in stature, to fight with him. Kenneth, king of Scotland, who was a guest at his court, made some offensive remark as to the power which had been established by "such a sorry little fellow." Edgar invited him to a private conference in a wood, and then proposed a duel. The sturdy Scot fell at his feet, say the chroniclers, and tendered his submission. Edgar made kings his watermen. At Chester, Kenneth, king of the Scots; Malcolm, king of the Cumbrians; Maccus, king of the Isles; kings of the Britons; kings of the Irish; do homage to him, and say each, "I become your man." Then, the king of Albion, the supreme king, takes his barge, and, sitting at the helm, is rowed down the Dee by his eight royal vassals; and at the banquet he exultingly tells his nobles, that his successors may well call themselves kings, since they will be the inheritors of his honour and glory. His immediate successor will perish at the bidding of his infamous wife; and the son of the guilty marriage will grovel in the dust before the Danish power, and reduce his kingdom to the lowest depth of disgrace.

It is a common mistake to imagine that the corrupt manners of a people, and the mistaken policy of their rulers, produce their instant retribution of national suffering and degradation. During the reign of Edgar we find many proofs of a vigorous administration. Dunstan was his constant director. In his hands the king was made the ready instrument of the ecclesiastical tyranny of his reign. The bulk of the people looked passively on the process; many nobles murmured and plotted. But the nation was corrupted by the conflict. Religion no longer wore an aspect of unity and peace; and the people naturally came to look with indifference on religion. Zealotry, working with obstinate passion for modes of faith rather than for the substance, is the parent of unbelief. Superstition may remain, but religion takes its flight, when her ministers hate and persecute each other with pagan virulence. Such persecution was going on in Saxon England during the rule of Dunstan. He wielded a despotic power; and he preserved a show of tranquillity. Nothing stood in the way of his stern justice. He made his king submit to seven years' penance for one of his outbreaks of licentiousness; and he hung three coiners of money before he would perform mass on a Whitsunday. Under him we recognise in the laws of Edgar a much stronger monarchical tone than Alfred or Athelstan ever ventured to assume. Alfred showed his laws to his witan, and promulgated them when to his council it seemed good. What Athelstan commanded "was established in the great synod." Edgar, according to the same precedent, takes counsel of his witan, but he ordains laws "in praise of God, and in honour to himself," as well as "for the behoof of all his people;" and concludes his ordinances in a strain of high and mighty patronage, which never before proceeded from a Saxon king to a free people:—"I will be to you a very kind lord, the while that my life lasts; and I am exceedingly well disposed towards you all."* In Edgar's charters the king's titles are set out in the most inflated style. Malmesbury speaks of

* "Ancient Laws and Institutions," p. 118.

the rigour of his justice. It appears that the most horrible punishments were inflicted upon offenders. We may judge of their severity when we find in a law of the unfortunate Ethelred, the son of Edgar, the following merciful relaxation: "And the ordinance of our lord and his witan is, that Christian men for all too little be not condemned to death; but in general let mild punishment be decreed, for the peoples' need; and let not for a little God's handywork and his own purchase be destroyed, which he dearly bought." * The payment of dues to the Church was enjoined with a severity almost beyond belief. They are exacted in the names of "I and the archbishop." A day was appointed for a man to pay his tithes; and if they were not paid he was to forfeit nine-tenths of his tithable property. The interference of the archbishop with the social customs of the people is one of the stories told to his honour. They were in the habit of quarrelling about the quantity that each man should drink out of the common cup; and he enacted that pegs should be put in the vessels, that no thirsty soul should take more than his just proportion. The legend shows two things—that the Saxons were very sensual and selfish; and that the restraint was sought in arbitrary power, instead of enforcing improved habits by the spread of knowledge and true religion. Malmesbury says that the people learned drunkenness from the Danes. It was not necessary that a people, under such circumstances as the Saxons under Edgar, should be taught any vices. They would spread, naturally enough, in a condition of society where the obligations of a holy life were merged in the superstitions incident to a fierce polemical controversy. In that controversy the ordinary social ties were loosened. There was nothing in its conditions to raise the laity to that enthusiasm which begets public virtue, whilst it too often casts aside the domestic affections. It was an iron domination, in which a sullen obedience was enforced by the genius of one man, for a generation, but which ultimately broke out into violent persecution and as fierce resistance. Then that principle of nationality was



Dinner Party and the Pledge. (Cotton MS.)

destroyed which had been growing up from the days of Alfred. Then came the time when no one could lift the wine-cup to his lips without a pledge for

* "Ancient Laws and Institutions," p. 129.

his safety required and given.* Then the peace between Saxon and Dane was obliterated in a horrible butchery. Then the Dane won the land which had been long kept from foreign attack and internal outrage by the wisdom and courage of the line of Wessex. The talent of Dunstan was preparing the final fall of the kingdom, even whilst he retarded the instant catastrophe.

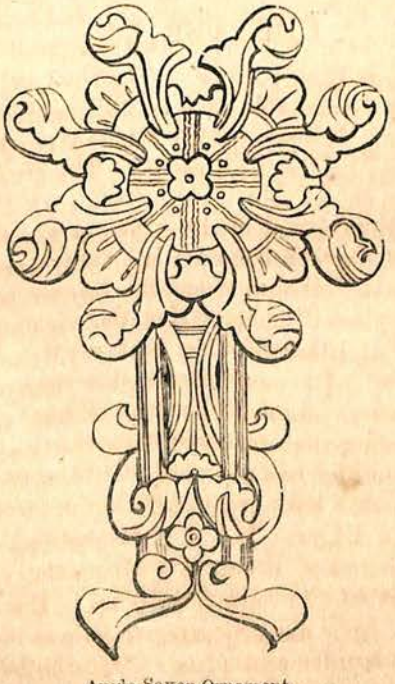
There is a curious circumstance in the reign of Edgar, of which no adequate explanation has been offered by any historian. He had been king fourteen years before he was consecrated. We have mentioned the tradition that he was forbidden by Dunstan to wear his crown for seven years, as a portion of the penance for the abduction of a nun. So writes Malmesbury. But this penance will not account for the suspension for fourteen years of that ceremony which was held essential to the recognition of the Saxon king. The ceremony was at last performed at Bath, with great pomp. Within two years Edgar died. He left two sons. Edward, the child of his first wife, Ethelfleda, was thirteen years old at his father's death. Ethelred, the son of Elfrida, was only seven. The question of succession to the vacant throne was immediately raised. A strong party of the nobles demanded that the choice between Edward and Ethelred should be determined by election. Dunstan, by one of his vigorous movements, quelled the dispute; and presenting Edward to the assembled thanes and ecclesiastics at Winchester, consecrated him on the spot. The question between an Edward and an Ethelred was the question, not of one brother, or the other, but of a secular or a monastic church. The reaction of violence now commenced. The Benedictines had expelled the secular clergy from the conventual churches; the married priests had been ejected from their parishes. Now one ealdorman expelled the monks from the monasteries, whilst another upheld them in their possessions. Many of the secular clergy had fled to Scotland during the reign of Edgar. They now returned. At their head was a bishop named Beornhelm, a Scottish or Irish bishop. "The choice of this advocate," says Sir F. Palgrave, "is a remarkable fact in ecclesiastical history, because it tends to prove that, at this period, the Church of the Scots, probably in Ireland, was not entirely subject to Rome."† The great parties were headed by the most powerful nobles and ecclesiastics. At Calne, in Wiltshire, a witena-gemot was assembled to debate the points which divided the Church, and threatened the kingdom with civil war. There spoke Beornhelm. He spoke with no diminution of power because a voice had previously spoken from a crucifix at Winchester, to determine the controversy in favour of the monks. He was not satisfied when, on that occasion, Dunstan exclaimed, "What wish ye more?" He was a daring unbeliever, and punishment was in store for him and his adherents. The assembly at Calne was held in an upper chamber. Dunstan rose. He was an aged man, he said, and would no longer contend with his opponents. He would commit the cause of the Church to the decision of Christ. The floor of the room gave way. But its

* Strutt, who, in his "Manners and Customs," first engraved the ancient representation of a Saxon feast in the Cotton MS., points out that "the middle figure is addressing himself to his companion, who tells him that he pledges him, holding up his knife in token of his readiness to assist and protect him." It is usual to refer the pledge to the period of Danish tyranny in the time of Ethelred. "The custom of pledging healths, still preserved amongst Englishmen, is said to be owing to the Saxons' mutual regard for each other's safety, and as a caution against the treacherous inhospitality of the Danes." Wise; quoted in Brand's "Popular Antiquities."

† "History of England," chap. xiii.

strength was miraculously proportioned so as to destroy some, whilst others, including Dunstan, were saved. "This miracle," says Malmesbury, "procured the archbishop's peace, on the score of the canons."

The year of the catastrophe at Calne, 978, presented another proof of the terrible spirit of mutual hatred which had been engendered by these contentions. Dunstan had a struggle to hold his power—a struggle to which he had long been unfamiliar. It would be unjust to attribute the fall of the building at Calne to his devices. But it is clear that the enemies of his system were becoming desperate. He was the adviser and controller of the young king Edward, as he had been of his father. The innocent boy was to be sacrificed as a party victim by those opposed to the monastic domination; and his abandoned step-mother, who hated him for standing in the way of her son's elevation, was included in the plot. At Corfe, a royal manor, resided Elfrida and Ethelred. Edward had been hunting at Wareham, and became separated from his companions. A dwarf appears out of the forest-coverts, and proposes to guide him to a place of rest and refreshment. He reaches the home of the widowed queen, who meets him at the door with a betraying kiss. She brings out wine to the wearied boy; and as he lifts the goblet to his lips, sitting on his horse, he is stabbed in the back. He spurs his steed from the fatal porch; faints and falls; is dragged in the stirrups; and is traced by his blood. We may well believe that the guilty woman, as the chroniclers record, suffered the most fearful terrors of an evil conscience; and we may also believe that many a less innocent saint has been canonised than this poor boy "Edward the Martyr."



Anglo-Saxon Ornament.

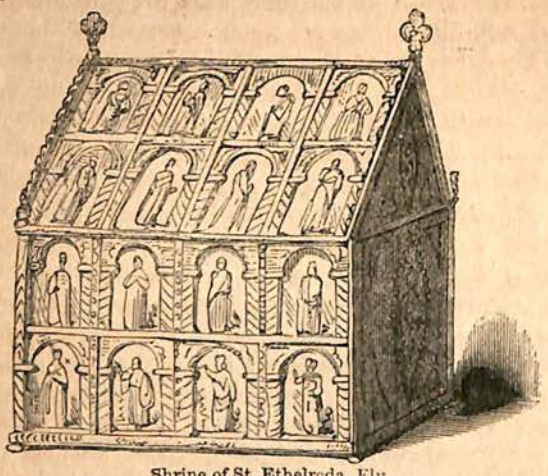
Canute and his Queen.

CHAPTER XI.

Ethelred.—Dunstan's hatred of the young king.—Renewed attacks of the Danes.—Payment of tribute to the Danes.—Corruption and treachery of the chieftains.—Exactions and sufferings.—Massacre of the Danes.—Sweyn, king of Denmark.—Flight of Ethelred.—Death of Sweyn, and Ethelred's recall.—Canute.—Edmund Ironside.—Division of the kingdom.—Death of Edmund.—Canute sole king.

It is recorded by the historians of the Abbey of Ely that, during the short reign of Edward, the mother of Ethelred went in solemn procession to the shrine of Saint Ethelreda, and that there the boy solemnly devoted himself to the service of the virgin patroness of that famous church. It would have been well for England if Ethelred "the unready" had been destined to become the drowsy head of a monastery rather than "the sleeping king" that he afterwards became. Malmesbury says of him that, "obtaining the kingdom, he occupied rather than governed it for thirty-seven years." It was a fatal reign, but its calamities had a deeper root than the personal character of the king. We have looked with great suspicion upon the monkish accounts of the eminent virtues of Edgar. We may be justified in similar doubts of some of the flagrant demerits of Ethelred. Malmesbury goes on to tell us, "The career of his life is said to have been cruel in the beginning . . . . in the murder to which he gave his concurrence he was cruel." He was only ten years old when this murder took place. Dunstan hated him; and when, as primate, he placed the crown upon his head, he pronounced this curse:

"Even as, by the death of thy brother, thou didst aspire to the kingdom, hear the decree of Heaven. The sin of thy wicked mother, and of her accomplices, shall rest upon thy head; and such evils shall fall upon the English as they have never yet suffered, from the days when they first came into the isle of Britain, even until the present time." * As Edward was murdered by the cruel policy of one party, so was Ethelred inducted into an unhappy reign by this vindictive prophecy of the chief of another party. Dunstan well knew the distractions of the country, and how much of the coming evils of renewed wars, of domestic treasons,



Shrine of St. Etheldreda, Ely.

of social profligacy, were to be attributed to his own counsels, and the fiery zeal of his adherents. His most unpatriotic prediction was made in the same spirit of haughty self-will which had distinguished all his rule. His power was sliding away; and he would render any other government difficult. Sir F. Palgrave says, "The calamities and miseries which ensued, and which in fact opened the way for the entire subjugation of the country by the Normans, if not occasioned by the very words of Dunstan, were yet extremely enhanced by the effect of his denunciations." These calamities, we believe, may be traced to the deeds of Dunstan much more clearly than to his words. When he dragged Edwy to the banqueting-hall, he was the same stern enthusiast as at the coronation of Ethelred. A quarter of a century had not taught him moderation. In an old play, in which Dunstan is one of the characters, he thus speaks of himself as having "flourished in the reign of seven great kings;" and he adds,

> "With all these kings was I in high esteem,
> And kept both them and all the land in awe;
> And had I lived, the Danes had never boasted
> Their then beginning conquest of this land." †

Dunstan lived till the tenth year of Ethelred's reign; but we have no record that he was "in high esteem." He retained his archbishopric; but he appears to have continued his hostility to the king's government up to nearly the time of his death. It was for the aggrandisement of the Church, and not for the peace of the realm, that he went on to denounce and to prophesy. A quarrel arose between the Crown and the Bishop of Rochester, in which the king asserted a demand by military force. Dunstan threatened him with the vengeance of Saint Andrew; but the payment of a sum of money was more effectual to restrain the king's hostility; and then the arch-priest again

* Malmesbury; quoted in Palgrave.

† "Grim, the Collier of Croydon:" Prologue. This curious performance is in Dodsley's Collection.

prophesied, saying, "The evils which God has pronounced will shortly come upon you; but they will not come while I live, for this also God hath spoken." Malmesbury says, "Soon after the death of this holy man, the predictions began to be fulfilled." It was not difficult to see their approach, without any revelation from on high. There had been no attack of the Danes since the reign of Athelstan. In 980, Sweyn, the banished son of the King of Denmark, was devastating the British shores. Where were now the three thousand six hundred ships with which Edgar, according to his absurd panegyrists, made annual progress round the coasts? In 980, Southampton was "ravaged by a ship force, and the most part of the townsmen slain and led captive. And that same year was Tanet-land ravaged." In 981, "was much havoc done every where by the sea-coast, as well amongst the men of Devon as among the Welsh." In 982, "landed among the men of Dorset, three ships of pirates; and they ravaged in Portland. That same year London was burnt." These are the simple notices of the Saxon Chronicle. There was no principle of resistance in the country, even to drive off the three ships that landed among the men of Dorset; for the men of Dorset, as other men, were quarrelling about the occupation of the monasteries, instead of arming for the defence of their homes. There was a noble who held the earldom of Mercia, Alfric, the son of Alfere. The father had been a courageous opponent of Dunstan, and was accused of having participated in the murder of Edward. The son engaged in a conspiracy against Ethelred, and he was banished. But he was soon restored to his former honours; for the government was too weak to restrain or to punish. In a few years the attacks of the Danes became more systematic. In 991, they landed in East Anglia; and here, alone, they found a sturdy resistance, amongst those of their own lineage. Brithnorth, the ealdorman, met them with a courage which has been celebrated in Saxon verse; but at Maldon, he fell by the "hassagay"—a weapon of which the fierce Saracens had shown the use to the fiercer pirates. The Danes ravaged Ipswich. "And in that year it was decreed, that tribute, for the first time, should be given to the Danish-men, on account of the great terror which they caused by the sea-coast. That was at first ten thousand pounds: this counsel advised first Archbishop Sidric." * It was a fatal counsel; "an infamous precedent, and totally unworthy the character of men, by money to redeem liberty, which no violence can ever extirpate from a noble mind." So thought, most truly, brave old William of Malmesbury—a chronicler whose prejudices were those of his order, his sense and learning his own.

Seal of Alfric, Earl of Mercia.

The history of England for the next quarter of a century is, in many respects, the most melancholy of its annals. It has been related in detail by modern historians; but it will be scarcely necessary for us to go through the dreary chapter of bloodshed, treachery, cowardice, and imbecility. It is

* Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

impossible that a martial race should have become suddenly so weak; a free government so incapable; a loyal nobility so traitorous; a Christian people so cruel;—only because a timid and frivolous king had been set up to rule over them. Nor was it because peace, as it was called, had been in the land for an unusual period. There was no real peace, because there was no national concord. Wessex had not been in arms against East Anglia; nor Mercia against Northumbria. But there was enmity in the hearts of West Saxons, East Anglians, Mercians, and Northumbrians, against their own kindred. Foreign mercenaries, too, had been gradually settling under the encouragement of the peaceable king; and foreign ecclesiastics had been filling the religious houses of his ambitious minister. Under Ethelred, the private vices of the great chieftains took a new direction in public corruption. Treachery and rivalry were in the court and the camp. The army was undisciplined. Their "commanders, if ever they met to confer, immediately chose different sides, and rarely or never united in one good plan; for they gave more attention to private quarrels than to public exigencies." This looks like a passage of modern history; but it is from a chronicle of seven hundred years ago. It is well that we cannot ascribe to recent times what is added by the old writer. "If in the midst of present danger they had resolved on any good plan, it was immediately communicated to the enemy by traitors." * The impoverishment of the land was the inevitable result of the weakness and wickedness of its rulers. Again and again came the Danes; for they had found a more certain treasure in the Dane-geld—the tribute which the cowardice of the government levied upon the people—than in any casual plunder of towns and villages. In 991, they were bribed and bought off with ten thousand pounds of silver; in 994, with sixteen thousand; in 1001, with twenty-four thousand; in 1007, with thirty-six thousand; and in 1012, with forty-eight thousand. A pound of silver was worth about three pounds of modern money, and would have purchased eight oxen, or fifty sheep. We may estimate the sufferings of the people in the payment of the Dane-geld, during twenty years, when we consider that one hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds were equal to six million seven hundred thousand sheep, or one million and seventy-two thousand oxen. The ordinary price of a hide of land was about five pounds of silver, and thus one hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds of silver would have purchased twenty-six thousand eight hundred hides, each of which maintained a free man's family. Taking the hide of arable land, with its appurtenances of woods and common lands, at a hundred acres, this Danish tribute was equal to the fee-simple of all the land of Norfolk and Suffolk, or nearly one-tenth of the whole acreage of England. But, wherever they planted their feet, there the invaders would be fed. Famine followed in their steps. There is one unvarying record in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: "The king and his witan desired that they should be sent to, and promised *tribute and food*." This record, which continues year after year, is occasionally varied by some notice of a gleam of public spirit, such as this: "And forces were often gathered against them; but so soon as they should have joined battle, then was there ever, through some cause, flight begun; and in the end they ever had the victory." What a picture does the following brief and simple narrative of this national ruin present of an

* Malmesbury, book ii. chap. x.

imbecile government and of a divided people: "Then went they again to their ships with their booty. And when they went to their ships, then ought the forces again to have gone out against them until they should land; but then the forces went home; and when they were eastwards, then were the forces kept westwards; and when they were southwards, then were our forces northwards. Then were all the witan summoned to the king; and they were then to counsel how this land might be defended. But although something might then be counselled, it did not stand even one month. At last there was no head-man who would assemble forces, but each fled as he best might; nor, at the last, would even one shire assist another."

Amidst the misery and disgrace of this "heavy time," as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle calls this period, there is one event more terrible and full of shame than the weakness which yielded tribute, or the cowardice which fled from battle. There were many of the old Danish settlers in England who had become a part of the nation, with homes to protect as much as their Saxon neighbours. Many had intermarried with the older inhabitants. During these new assaults of their terrible countrymen, the Danes had probably become insolent and overbearing; so that "the common people were so of them oppressed, that for fear and dread they called them, in every house as they had rule of, Lord Dane." * In 1002, Ethelred had married Emma, the sister of the Duke of Normandy. Immediately after his marriage, on the feast of St. Brice, the king issued orders for a massacre of the Danes within the district over which he had authority. On that terrible 13th of November, as bloody a tragedy was enacted in this country as the history of religious persecution or national hatred can furnish in any country. The old writer we have just quoted says, that, "as common fame telleth, this murder began at a little town in Hertfordshire, within twenty-four miles of London, called Welwynne." This place is not far from the ancient boundary of the Saxon and Danish territory; and it is not unlikely that the people were much intermixed. The poet of the "Night Thoughts," who dwelt in this charming village, could have found no more solemn theme of death and woe than this sad history. Men, women, children, were indiscriminately butchered. The sister of Sweyn, the Northman, who was married in England, and had adopted the Christian faith, was amongst the victims. In the agony of her last hours the heroic Gunhilda warned her murderers that a terrible retribution would come upon England for this national crime. In less than a year Sweyn was in the land with fire and desolation.

The massacre of the Danes on the feast of St. Brice has some resemblance to the massacre of the French in the thirteenth century, which is known as the Sicilian Vespers. They were each the result of a sudden and cowardly vengeance under insult and oppression. When William the Conqueror desired to excite his Normans against the Saxons, he called upon them to remember St. Brice's day. Yet, in spite of the atrocious character of this event, the national dislike of the Danes was cherished in Saxon England for centuries after the days of Ethelred and Sweyn. In the famous visit to Kenilworth of Queen Elizabeth, the people of Coventry came to her with a petition † that "they might renew now their old storial show; of argument how the Danes whilom here in a troublous season were for quietness borne withal

* Fabyan's Chronicle, cap. 98.

† Laneham's Letter, 1575.

and suffered in peace; that anon, by outrage and unsupportable insolency, abusing both Ethelred the king, then, and all estates every where besides; at the grievous complaint and counsel of Huna, the king's chieftain in wars, on Saint Brice's night, anno Dom. 1002, (as the book says, that falleth yearly on the thirteenth of November,) were all despatched and the realm rid. And for because that the matter mentioneth how valiantly our English women, for love of their country, behaved themselves, expressed in action and rhymes after their manner, they thought it might move some mirth to her Majesty the rather. The thing is grounded in story, and for pastime wont to be played in our city yearly." It was a strange pastime for a queen to look on, who knew something of the real history of her country. The people, probably, were little aware that they were celebrating a great disgrace of their ancestors. They exhibited a fight between the Danish lance-knights and the English spearmen, with Danes subdued and led captive by English women. The traditions upon which their storial show was founded were a mixture of truth and falsehood. They knew of the outrage and insolency of a troublous season long past. The treacherous revenge had faded out of the popular legends.

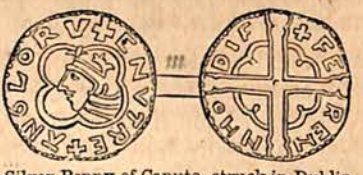
From the year 1003 to 1007, the retribution which Gunhilda had foreseen was going on. Devastation came after devastation, and tribute was exacted after tribute. The people in a brief time would pay no longer; and a bolder and wiser policy was adopted. A man in harness was to be provided upon every eight hides of land, and a vessel from every three hundred and ten hides. Out of the latter contribution came the precedent for that claim for "ship-money," to the resistance of which claim we probably owe the power yet to build ships, and to man them, and to feel more secure through these bulwarks than if every landing-place were covered with walls of granite. But vessels of war, and men in harness, are worthless without brave and faithful leaders. A vast naval force in 1009 was assembled at Sandwich. There were so many ships as were never before, according to the Chronicle. But there was a quarrel amongst the commanders, and a great wind cast the ships upon the land. "Then was it as if it had been all hopeless; and the king went his way home, and the ealdormen and the high witan, and thus lightly left the ships; and then afterwards, the people who were in the ships brought them to London; and they let the whole nation's toil thus lightly pass away." At this period there was treachery on every side. There were minor traitors who were punished; but the great traitor, Alfric, who again and again betrayed his country, retained all his ancient power. There was another traitor, the king's favourite, Edric; who, after a series of intrigues against his weak master, finally joined the Danish forces with a large body of men, and assisted in the ravage of Canterbury. The one true and bold heart was to be found in Alphege, the archbishop of Canterbury. He exhorted the people to defend their city; and for twenty days there was a vigorous defence. But another traitor, by name Elfmar, secretly admitted the enemy. The Danes burnt the city, and carried off the inhabitants as slaves. They demanded ransom if they spared the life of the primate; but he nobly said, that he had no goods of his own to offer for ransom, and that the goods of the Church should not be given up for his own life. They dragged him from his squalid prison, and setting him in the midst of a company of drunken revellers, they threw their weapons at him, and the bones of their coarse banquet; and

amidst the cries of "Gold, bishop, Gold," he was struck to the earth, and the blow of an axe ended his sufferings.

There came, at last, a fleet from Denmark—not for plunder or tribute, but for conquest. The chief devastator had been Thurkill, who, for three years, had been carrying on a predatory war on his own account. But in 1012, having received a vast sum from Ethelred, he became a mercenary under the English. The King of Denmark came with his great fleet, decorated with all the tawdry devices of barbaric pomp, to carry on a war of extermination. His commands were to ravage the fields, to burn the houses, to put every male to the edge of the sword. Lighting his war-beacons wherever he went on his march from the Humber, he was at length under the walls of London. Ethelred and his Danish officer, Thurkill, successfully defended the city. Sweyn retreated to Bath, and there proclaimed himself king of England, and received homage from all the western nobles, and from those of the north. Ethelred now fled to the Isle of Wight, and London surrendered. All the misfortunes of the country are imputed to the unhappy king. But he appears to have come nigher to the truth, in the address which he made to his few faithful adherents. He imputed his misfortunes to the treachery of his generals. The country was subdued; the coast was watched. They had more to apprehend from their own countrymen than from their enemies. He should send his wife and children to Richard of Normandy. If he could not with him find an honourable asylum, he should not want spirit to die where he was, undishonoured. To Richard of Normandy the king went. He had been a faithless husband, but he was received with kindness. In 1014, Sweyn died. His army proclaimed his son Canute as king; but Ethelred was recalled by "all the witan who were in England, clergy and laity." They recalled him upon terms—"that no lord were dearer to them than their natural lord, if he would rule them rightlier than he had done before." This condition (in which it is held "we may discern the germ of Magna Charta, and of all the subsequent compacts between the king and people of England"*) was accepted by Ethelred, in these words: "He would be to them a loving lord, and amend all those things which they all abhorred; and each of those things should be forgiven which had been done or said to him, on condition that they all, with one consent, would be obedient to him without deceit." Ethelred came home; and it was declared that "every Danish king should be an outlaw from England for ever." But there was a Danish king in England who made little of empty words. The recall of Ethelred was, most probably, the act only of a part of the nation. Canute held possession of a large portion of the land. Edric, the ancient traitor, kept his old power with his old guile. Edmund, the son of Ethelred, was well qualified by his bodily strength, which gave him the name of "Ironside," and by his energetic valour, to be that leader which the Saxon race had so long needed. Edric was circumventing Edmund at every step. In the meantime Canute was establishing his full claim to sovereignty. In the April of 1016, Ethelred died. The citizens of London proclaimed Edmund king. A council sitting at Southampton, which had previously decreed that every Danish king should be an outlaw, took the oaths to Canute. There was instant preparation for war on both sides. Canute had a great fleet in the Thames. Edmund

* Palgrave, History of England, chap. xiii.

marched boldly into Wessex, and was there accepted as king. He then raised the siege of London. Battle after battle ensued; and the Ironside would have cleared the land of his enemies, but for that false confidence which had ruined his father. He trusted once more to Edric; and in the moment of victory, the betrayer, who had a command in the Saxon army, suddenly cried out, "Flee, English, flee; dead is Edmund." The English fled. Edmund and Canute agreed to divide the sovereignty. In a very short time Edmund died, and his death is attributed, reasonably enough, to the hand of Edric. Whether or not Canute had given greater "warrant" than "the winking of authority," it is recorded that when Edric came to urge rewards for service, Canute told him that a new lord could expect little fealty from one who had murdered his old lord; and that, upon this hint, Eric of Northumbria slew the traitor with his battle-axe.



Silver Penny of Canute, struck in Dublin.

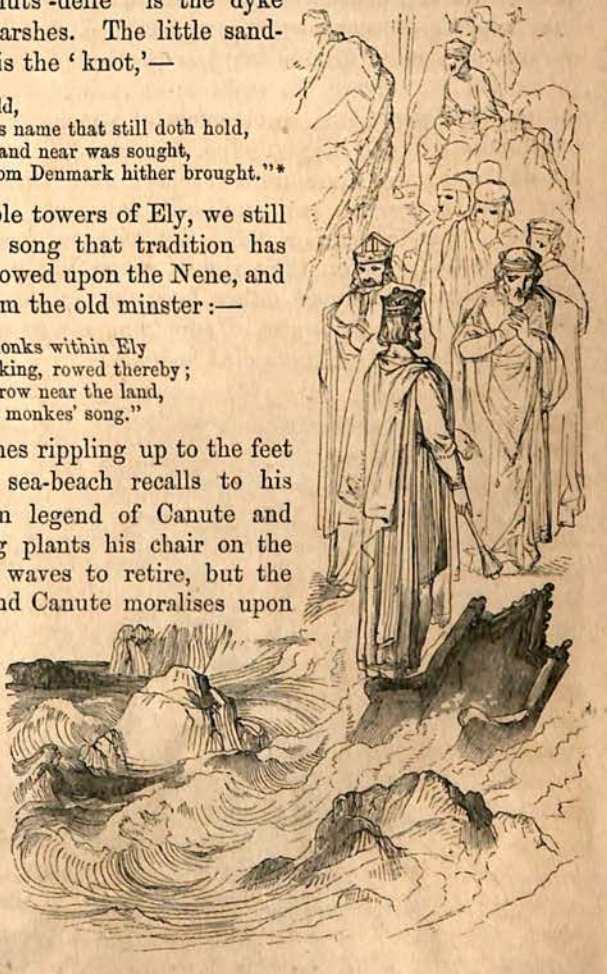
Canute the Dane is in 1017 sole king of England. He calls upon the witan to annul the division of the kingdom by declaring that Edmund had reserved no right of succession, and that Canute was to be the guardian of his children. This guardianship consisted in outlawing them. The infant boys were sent to the king of Sweden, with such intimation of the usurper's wishes as an unscrupulous prince would have readily acted upon. But the king of Sweden removed them to a safe asylum in Hungary. The children grew to manhood; and the younger, Edmund, became the father of Edgar Atheling, and of Margaret, the queen of Malcolm of Scotland. Edwy, the brother of the heroic king Edmund, was slain by command of Canute. There were two other claimants to the English throne,

Edward and Alfred, the sons of Ethelred by his wife Emma of Normandy. Their rights were asserted by their uncle Richard; but Canute settled the dispute by marrying their mother. His proscriptions of English nobles had no limit but his own will; and their forfeited property was bestowed upon his Danish instruments. Then was that tyranny at its height which so long rankled in the Saxon heart; and another day of St. Brice was dreaded by the lordly Northmen. A law imposed a fine upon any township where a Dane was killed. A Saxon might be murdered without such penalty. The Danish thanes were surrounded by their countrymen in the great cities. London, which had so stoutly resisted the intruders, received their yoke. We find many indelible traces of their presence in the land. A place of public assembly became the Danish "husting." The Northmen's saint, St. Olave, has given his name to London churches. "Knuts'-delfe" is the dyke near the Peterborough marshes. The little sandpiper of the fen counties is the 'knot,'—

"Canutus' bird of old,
Of that great king of Danes, his name that still doth hold,
His appetite to please that far and near was sought,
For him, as some have said, from Denmark hither brought."*

As we look upon the noble towers of Ely, we still associate them with the song that tradition has ascribed to Canute, as he rowed upon the Nene, and the choral hymn burst from the old minster:—

"Merrily sang the monks within Ely
When that Cnute, king, rowed thereby;
Row, my knights, row near the land,
And hear we these monkes' song."



The tide, even, that comes rippling up to the feet of the lingerer by the sea-beach recalls to his memory the well-known legend of Canute and his courtiers. The king plants his chair on the sands, commanding the waves to retire, but the waters will not obey; and Canute moralises upon the vanity of earthly rule, compared with that of the Power who alone could say to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

The impression of his character which Canute has left upon the English mind is not that of the barbarous conqueror. We cannot say of him, as one of our great masters of English said of Alfred, "He left learning where he found ignorance; justice, where he found oppression; peace, where he found distraction."† But he came, with a powerful will, to make a foreign domination endurable

* Drayton, Polyolbion. † Fuller, Worthies, vol. i. p. 64.

by a show of impartiality, and to substitute the strength of despotism for the feebleness of anarchy. When he ceased to be an enemy of England he became a real friend. His power was too strong to be disputed; and he therefore wielded it with moderation, after the contest for supremacy was fairly over. He, the emperor of the Anglo-Saxons, as he chose to be called, was also king of Swedes, and Danes, and Norwegians. He was an unmitigated despot in his own half-Christian lands; but he adapted his English rule to the higher civilisation of his most important kingdom. In 1030 he made a pilgrimage to Rome, with his staff and wallet; and amidst the passes of the Alps, or beside the ruins of the Cæsars, he thought humbly of his past life, and made new resolves for his future career. His letter to "all the nations of the English," which he sent from Denmark after his return from Rome, has one passage which may make us believe that power and prosperity are not always corrupting:—"And now, be it known to you all, that I have dedicated my life to God, to govern my kingdoms with justice, and to observe the right in all things. If, in the time that is past, and in the violence and carelessness of youth, I have violated justice, it is my intention, by the help of God, to make full compensation. Therefore I beg and command those unto whom I have entrusted the government, as they wish to preserve my good will, and save their own souls, to do no injustice either to poor or rich. Let those who are noble, and those who are not, equally obtain their rights, according to the laws, from which no deviation shall be allowed, either from fear of me, or through favour to the powerful, or for the purpose of supplying my treasury. I want no money raised by injustice." Canute died in 1035.

Winchester.

CHAPTER XII.

Saxon and Danish races—Harold and Hardicanute—Murder of Alfred—Death of Hardicanute—Election of Edward the Confessor—Earl Godwin—Influence of the Normans—Banishment of Godwin and his sons—Triumph of the Norman party.

CANUTE, who died at Shaftesbury, was buried at Winchester. The Danish conqueror found his last resting-place amidst the old Saxon kings. A northern antiquary draws the following inferences from the contemplation of the chest in the choir of the present cathedral, in which the bones are collected, according to an inscription, of Kings Canute and Rufus, of Queen Emma, and of two archbishops:—"An immense change had taken place with regard to the Danes in England, since their first appearance there as barbarous heathen vikings. Instead of their kings seeking renown by the destruction of churches and convents, and by murdering or maltreating the clergy; instead of their despising any other kind of burial than that in the open fields, or hills under large caverns or monumental stones; their successors were now regarded as the benefactors and protectors of the Church, and, as such, worthy to repose in the most important ecclesiastical edifices,—even in the principal district of their former mortal enemies."* Canute, he adds, "had happily broken through the strong barrier which had hitherto separated Saxon south England from Danish north England." From this period, indeed, it would be useless to attempt to draw distinctions between the Saxon and Danish races. The ingenious author we have quoted, with a laudable patriotism, endeavours to show that many of the names and customs which we ordinarily call Saxon are Danish. He has probably carried his theory much too far, by looking at such matters "from the Danish point of view."† In regard to language, we may well believe that the dialect of the later settlers of

* "The Danes in England," by J. J. A. Worsaae, p. 29.

† See an able article in "Gentleman's Magazine," March, 1852.

Northumbria and East Anglia became blended with that of the earlier settlers of Wessex and Mercia. In the same way the several races became gradually intermixed. Thomas Fuller says of the Saxons, that their "offspring at this day are the main bulk and body of the English (though not gentry) nation;" and of the Danes, that "living here rather as inroaders than inhabitants, is the cause that so few families (distinguishable by their surnames) are descended from them, extant in our age." * This good old writer may also have carried his theory a little too far. Whether the Johnsons, Jacksons, Thomsons, Stevensons, are descended from Danes or otherwise, there is no doubt that "the ending, *son* or *sen* (a son), is quite peculiar to Scandinavia." We may also accept the statement of a striking fact, "which will not escape the attention of at least any observant Scandinavian traveller, that the inhabitants of the north of England bear, on the whole, more than those of any other part of that country, an unmistakeable personal resemblance to the Danes and Norwegians." † Still, the conclusion is tolerably clear that "the main bulk and body of the English nation" is Saxon. Compared with south and mid-England, the north was very scantily peopled until it became the great seat of manufacturing industry; and in the period before the Norman Conquest, and long after, it is manifest that a district of fertile lowland, whose plains are watered by gentle rivers, would support a far greater agricultural population, than a district where the valleys are narrow and the mountains sterile. From this period, therefore, when the contest of two centuries between Saxon and Dane came to an end, we shall consider the Danish population as a part of the great Anglo-Saxon family; with whom they had at last become identical, in the possession of a common country and a common religion.

Canute had two sons previous to his marriage with Emma of Normandy. They were illegitimate. The one was Sweyn; the other Harold, called Harefoot. His legitimate son by Emma was Hardicanute. At the time of Canute's death, the two sons of Ethelred, also the children of Emma, were living in Normandy. The two sons of Edmund Ironside were in Hungary. Of these possible claimants to the crown of England, Harold was the only one in the country. Sweyn had the kingdom of Norway assigned to him in his father's lifetime; Hardicanute was in Denmark. The great nobles were divided as to the choice of a successor to the Danish king; but at a witenagemot held at Oxford, it was decided that Mercia and Northumbria should be assigned to Harold; whilst Wessex should be held by Emma, as regent for her son Hardicanute, who remained in his Scandinavian kingdom. There was a strong party in Wessex, who would have preferred the sons of their old Saxon king Ethelred. Edward, in consequence, came over with Norman soldiers. But these new followers of an English prince were hateful to the people; and Edward very soon gave up an enterprise which involved so much of personal risk. A similar attempt of his brother Alfred had a tragic ending. With a few adherents he landed in Kent, and proceeded to Canterbury, where the people gladly received him. Ethelnoth, the archbishop, welcomed the exile; for Harold, who had claimed to be supreme king over all England, was living an infamous life, and the archbishop had refused to consecrate him. The unfortunate Alfred was the victim of an abominable

* "Worthies," chap. xxiv. † "Danes in England," p. 80.

plot; and was seduced into the rash step of placing himself in the power of an unscrupulous tyrant. A letter had been written in the name of his mother, urging her son to make an attempt to obtain the kingdom. When Alfred had advanced into the country, Earl Godwin, who had supported the claims of Hardicanute, received him with open arms, and conducted him to Guildford. In the night, the weary adventurers were seized and manacled. There are various narratives of their subsequent fate. Some write that the greater number were massacred; and that Alfred was blinded, and finally put to death at Ely. "No bloodier deed had been done in this land since the Danes came," as one chronicler writes. The mother of Alfred fled to Bruges; and Harold was proclaimed king of all England.

The illegitimate son of Canute—the son of a shoemaker, as the scandal of those times assumes—did not long retain his ill-gotten power. He died in 1039. Hardicanute was now invited to take possession of the vacant throne. His election equally satisfied the Saxons and the Danes. A deputation was sent to Bruges to conduct him and his mother to the kingdom; and the ships which Hardicanute had intended for a hostile descent bore him to the Thames for a peaceful coronation. Setting an example of that paltry vengeance which, in what we call civilised times, disgraced the Restoration of the Stuarts, he caused the body of Harold to be disinterred; to be decapitated; and to be cast into the Thames. There were some proscriptions; and there was extravagant taxation, which drove the people of Exeter to revolt. But the country soon settled into tranquillity under this brief rule. Hardicanute sent for his half-brother Edward, and treated him with a kindness which shows some generosity of nature. He was probably not of a vindictive or suspicious temper; but had some of the negative merits that not unfrequently are associated with the character of the indolent voluptuary. He was propitiated by the splendid presents of the powerful Godwin; and suffered his mother and the great earl to rule the kingdom, whilst he abandoned himself to his feasts and carousals. He was surrounded by Danish flatterers and boon-companions. His followers were insolent to the Saxon race; but their sociality was more injurious than their insults. The Saxons were addicted to intemperance; yet the examples of Hardicanute and his courtiers plunged them still deeper into sensuality. Hardicanute, the last of the Danish kings, soon made an end of his feasts and dominion. At a great marriage-banquet at the house of Clapa, one of his thanes (from which house we are held to derive the name of our suburban Clapham), the king stood up at a late hour of the night to pledge the company, and dropping speechless, was carried to his death-bed, after having reigned a little less than two years.

At the death of Hardicanute, in 1042, the English people, however composed of Angles, Saxons, and Danes, had been under direct foreign domination for a quarter of a century. Under the weak government of Ethelred, for thirty-seven years, the Saxons had sustained an unequal conflict with their plundering and tribute-exacting enemy. All the glories of the race of Cerdic had vanished. The kingdom had passed through a long period of intestine conflicts and of exhausting wars. But there was still a people. There was a people, with the memories of Alfred, and the first Edward, and Athelstan, still preserved in their national songs and traditions. The last of the oppressing race was gone. The lineal descendant of the Saxon race was

amongst them. Edward, the son of Ethelred, had been brought up an exile with the relations of his mother. He had no vigour of character; he had received the education of a monk rather than that of the descendant of a long line of kings; he was familiar with other customs, and with another language, than that belonging to his race. In his mind the great idea of nationality had but little place. But he was the one left, in whom the Saxons could cherish those sacred feelings of a legitimate descent which gave to the king the attribute of blood—that attribute which, in the eyes of the people, was more important than the talent and courage of any claimant to dominion who was not of the stock of those sons of Woden, who, five hundred years before, had led the blue-eyed myriads to conquest. There was a man in England, of eminent ability, of almost supreme power, who had that intense feeling of nationality which would make the Saxon race again predominant, and in that predominance would absorb all the minor differences which separated the Danish settlers from the Saxon. That man was Earl Godwin. He saw, which was not difficult to discover, that on the opposite shores there had grown up a nation that would be a more formidable enemy to England than any of the Scandinavian people. He knew that the conquest of England had long been the secret aspiration of the Norman. The descendants of Rollo, planted in a rich soil; cultivating arts in which England was inferior; possessing a more refined luxury; of indomitable courage amidst their refinements; dreaded by the Frankish kings whose sovereignty they despised; the conquerors of Sicily; the heirs of the courage and the ambition of the old sea-kings;—these were the men whom England had now to dread. Was Godwin powerful enough to be the leader of his country? The time was not come. He put Edward upon the throne; and he gave to him his own daughter in marriage.

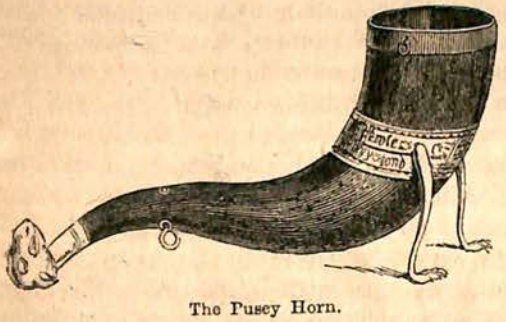
Godwin is the prominent man in the reign of Edward the Confessor. His participation in the murder of Edward's brother was "the cry of the Normans," as Thierry emphatically puts it. He was the antagonist of the Normans; and we may readily believe that their historians loaded his memory with unmerited obloquy. Before a great assembly of the witan, in the time of Hardicanute, he swore, according to the Saxon laws—and his oath was, according to the same laws, supported by kinsmen, friends, or witnesses—that he had taken no part in the death of Alfred. At the accession of Edward he held the greatest earldom of the south, including Sussex, Kent, and part of Wessex. His sons, Harold and Sweyn, were, with their father, the lords of all the land from the Humber to the Severn. They had the command of half England, and of the richest half. There were other brothers of this powerful family—Wulnoth, Tostig, Gurth, and Leofwine—who were subsequently advanced to high dignities. Edith, the daughter of Godwin, who became queen, exhibits, in the quiet charms of her character, a proof that in the family of the ambitious earl she had received a gentle nurture Ingulphus, the monk of Croyland, says of her, in a Latin hexameter, "As the thorn is the parent of the rose, so is Godwin of Editha;" and he adds, "I have seen her many times in my childhood, when I went to visit my father who was dwelling in the king's palace. Oftentimes, when I was returning from school, would she question me in my grammar, or my verses, or my logic, in which she was skilful; and when, after much subtle argument, she had

concluded, she would, by her handmaiden, give me some pieces of money, and send me for refreshment to the buttery." This rose never saw another rose bloom from her tree. Her husband, with the superstition of the cloister, first neglected her. Then came a time when he persecuted her. She was forced upon the king—a mature man of forty—say some of the chroniclers, and they put these words into Godwin's mouth, "Swear to me that you will take my daughter for your wife, and I will give you the kingdom of England." According to others, Edward was as unwilling to receive the kingdom as to be encumbered with a wife. Malmesbury says, that, upon the death of Hardicanute, Edward was in great perplexity; that having desired a conference with Godwin, he threw himself at his feet, imploring him to facilitate his return to Normandy; and that to him Godwin answered, that the kingdom was Edward's right; that he was disciplined by difficulties in exile; from his former poverty would feel for the miseries of his people; and that if he would rely upon him, his throne would be secure. The chroniclers represent this as politic ambition postponing its own designs. It appears to us very like honest patriotism. Malmesbury adds of Godwin, "He was a man of ready wit, and spoke fluently in the vernacular tongue; powerful in bringing over the people to whatever he desired." Of Edward we may truly say, he was a man of slow understanding; spoke a tongue which the people did not comprehend; and was powerful to accomplish nothing by his own will. With the vast possessions and popular qualities of Godwin, there is some credit due to him not to have gone the readiest way to supreme power.

It is difficult to trace the origin of Godwin's greatness. An old MS. Chronicle says that he was the son of a Saxon herdsman. Mr. Turner has given a romantic story from a Northern Saga, which shows how the earl rose from the humblest of the people. After the decisive battle between Canute and Edmund, Ulfr, a Danish chieftain high in the favour of Canute, had been separated from the army. In much danger he passed the night in a wood; and in the morning he saw a lad driving his cattle to pasture. The Dane asked the way to Canute's ships. The boy said, the way was long; the danger was great; he should himself be in peril should he assist one of his country's enemies. Gold was proffered; but the gold was refused. At length young Godwin conducted the thane to the shelter of his father's house; and finally was his guide to the camp of Canute. His service was rewarded; his talents gained him favour; the chieftain gave him his sister in marriage; and the herdsman's son—"the child of Sussex"—became the great earl. There were two other mighty chieftains, who divided the kingdom with Godwin and his family, as the delegates of the sovereign: Leofric, who ruled the northern counties of Mercia; and Siward, whose earldom reached from the Humber to the Scottish borders. This was the Siward of Shakspere,—"Warlike Siward"—"Old Siward"—the protector of Malcolm, the son of the murdered Duncan—the father of "young Siward," who perished in the battle-field where Macbeth fell. "Where were his wounds?" said the stout old earl. "In front." "Then I would wish no better fate."

By these powerful nobles was the throne of Edward upheld, at the beginning of his reign. They asserted the Saxon supremacy; and expelled the traitorous or tyrannising Danes from the country. They united in resisting the pretensions of Magnus, the successor of Hardicanute in Denmark,

to the English kingdom. But the influence of Godwin and his family soon came to be regarded with suspicion. One of Godwin's sons, Sweyn, was guilty of atrocities, which still indicate a period when violence is the ready instrument of power. He carried off an abbess; and was outlawed. He became a terror of the sea, in the old trade of piracy. At length the king pronounced his pardon to the outlaw; but his brother Harold, and his cousin Beorn, opposed the royal clemency; and Sweyn murdered his cousin. Still he was restored to his estates and honours by the weak-minded king. But his crime was not forgotten. It was one of the causes by which the character of the family of Godwin was lowered; and the influence which they held over the people was for a season diminished. Their strength was, in a short time, to be measured not only with the envy of their rivals, but with the authority of their king. Edward was, however, deficient in force of character, a gentle and merciful ruler. He had abolished the Dane-gelt. Under the old laws, the Saxon and the Dane now lived in peace. They pursued their industrious occupations, and the country was flourishing. The fierce contests about ecclesiastical discipline had passed away. There was no foreign power to disturb the rest of the pacific king. He hunted and he hawked in his forest of Bernwood, near Brill; and there he gave a hunting-horn to Nigel, the huntsman who slew a fierce boar, — the famous Borstal horn, by which the Aubrey family hold the estates with which the king endowed the boar-slayer. So the lands of the Pusey family are still held by the horn which King Canute bestowed upon their ancestor William. The gentle king was, moreover, a healer of the sick, and a restorer to sight of the blind. It was he who first used "the healing benediction," which he left to "the succeeding royalty," so that even the pious Charles II. "touched" eight thousand five hundred of his afflicted subjects in one year, and a hundred thousand in the course of his reign.* Malmesbury, somewhat damagingly to those who believed, to very recent times, in the virtue of the touch from the legitimate king, imputes the power of Edward to "his personal sanctity," and not to "hereditary virtue in the royal line." With these various occupations, Edward might have lived through a long reign untroubled, could he have forgotten the associations of his years of exile. When he became possessed of the power and riches that belonged to the crown of fertile England, the Normans crowded round him to share the abundance of his treasury. They came to fill the great offices of his household; to be the leaders of his troops; to take the command of his fortresses; to be his spiritual directors; to have the richest abbeys and the most honoured bishoprics. The seal of wax which Edward was the first to affix to his charters, instead of the mark of the cross of the Anglo-Saxon kings, was an offence against the



The Pusey Horn.

* See a curious account of the resistance of William III. to the continuance of this superstition, in Macaulay's "History of England," vol. iii. p. 478.

nationality of England. In the palace where Edith was queen, her father and brothers spoke their country's speech, and wore their country's long mantle; whilst Edward gathered around him the short-cloaked Normans, and bade his subjects address their petitions to his clerks, who only heard those who could employ the polite Romance-tongue of Normandy. The Norman favourites ridiculed the Saxon earls; and the Saxon earls looked for a day of vengeance upon the Norman favourites.

Eustace, Count of Boulogne, had married Goda, the sister of Edward, who was the widow of Gualtier of Mantes. He came to the court of his brother-in-law, with a great retinue. Here he would meet with bishops and abbots, earls and knights, of French lineage. Radulf, the foreign nephew of the king, was there, all-powerful. Eustace naturally thought that England was a tribute-land for the Normans, and that the Saxon was a born slave. On his return to Boulogne, he had to rest at Dover. Before entering the town he ordered his men to put on their hauberks; and at the head of his followers he demanded quarters of the sturdy householders. We can imagine the stir

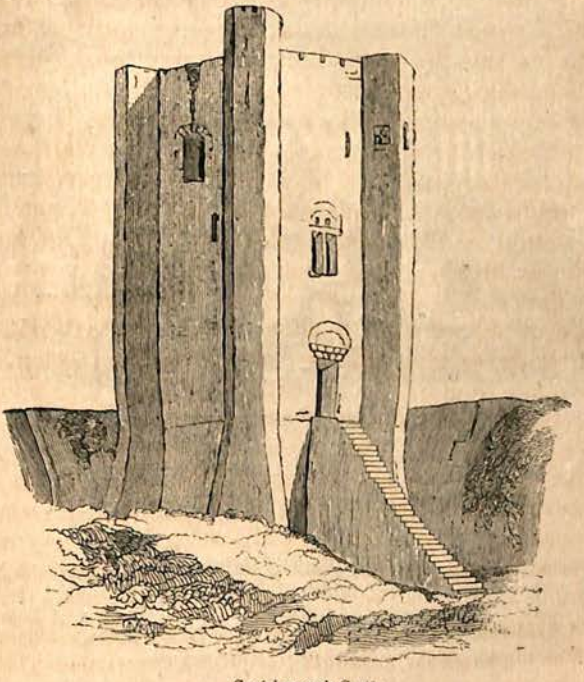
Great Seal of Edward the Confessor.

in the little town under the cliff. The burghers resisted the insolent mandate; and one who refused entrance to the foreigners was slain. Then Count Eustace, when the cry of vengeance rose amongst the people, made a furious onslaught with his spearmen upon the inhabitants, and many fell under the French lances. But it was not their ringed mail that could save them from the swords of the infuriated Kentish men. The burghers hastily armed, and forming themselves in the military order with which they were familiar, encountered the horsemen of Boulogne, and slew nineteen. Then a solitary rider, with a broken plume in his gilt helmet, was madly spurring on the highway, for the people had intercepted his passage to the harbour. A few of his followers came up; and together they took their course along the Watling-street, till they had reached the king's presence at Gloucester. There, surrounded by his Norman court, the pacific king showed unwonted

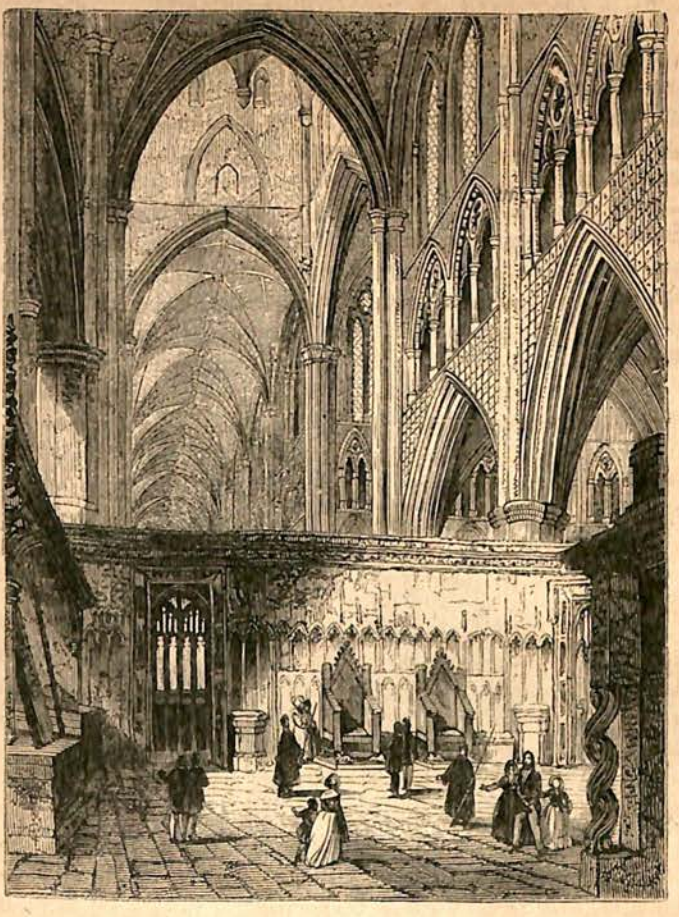
fury against his rebellious subjects, who had resisted the will of his brother-in-law. He sent for Earl Godwin, in whose earldom this outbreak had taken place, and ordered him to visit the people of Dover with a summary vengeance, The earl refused. They should have legal trial in the burh-gemot; he would see justice done; but he would not punish, without a hearing, those whom the king was bound to protect. Sullenly Edward yielded. But the Norman counsellors represented the discretion of Godwin as direct rebellion; and he was summoned to appear before a great council at Gloucester. In his defence of the people of Dover against an illegal chastisement, he had done his strict duty. The eloquent burst of Chatham was as true in the eleventh century as in the eighteenth: "The poorest man in his cottage may bid defiance to all the forces of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the storm may enter it; but the king of England cannot enter it. All his power dares not cross the threshold of that ruined tenement." The Anglo-Saxon had the legal right to resist, even to the death, any one who presumed to intrude into his dwelling, as follower of baron or of king. Was then Godwin, in his earldom, to punish those who, in the same spirit of ancient freedom, had resisted an insolent foreigner, because he was the husband of the king's sister? But the discharge of his duty would be no plea for his contumaciousness. While Edward was surrounded by his new favourites, Godwin saw danger; and he came prepared for resistance. The hour for resistance was come, if Saxon-England were to hold her laws and her independence. He and his sons marched to the west with a large force; and they demanded that Eustace and his men should be delivered to their custody. The Earls Siward and Leofric upheld the king, and mustered their forces. They came unwillingly. They came at first with a few men; but at the entreaties of the king they brought up the militia of their earldoms. The Norman Earl of Worcester joined the party of the king with a more determined spirit, than those felt who were unwilling to draw the sword against their own people. Civil war seemed imminent. "But, inasmuch as the best men in all England were assembled together on his side and theirs, it seemed to Earl Leofric and some others, to be the more prudent part not to begin a battle with their fellow-countrymen; but they proposed that, exchanging hostages, the king and Godwin should, on a day named, meet at London for a conference." * The king, or rather his Norman advisers, employed the interval in raising a great army; whilst Godwin's adherents returned to their homes. The king's army was commanded by Normans. In London, thus beleaguered, was Godwin and his two sons summoned to attend the witan. They demanded hostages for their personal safety; but the demand was refused. Then Godwin and his sons, after a second demand, and a second refusal of hostages, disobeyed the summons. Sweyn, by sentence of the witan, was outlawed. Godwin and Harold were sentenced to banishment—to depart out of England within five days. Harold sailed from Bristol to Ireland; Godwin and Sweyn, from the east coast to Flanders. They, the proudest of the land, were driven from their homes and their large possessions. They had, in the plenitude of their power, pressed hardly upon a weak master; and he, after the fashion of all imbecile and timid rulers, was ready enough to be more oppressive than those who, out of their own strong wills, are calculatingly

* Roger de Hoveden.

despotic. The unmanly king extended his revenge to his own wife. He stripped her of every means of independent maintenance—of money, of lands. He plundered her of every womanly ornament. He sent her to the cheerless prison of a monastery,—that of Wherwell, where his own sister, the abbess, would be ready enough to persecute one so fair and so accomplished as Edith, the daughter of the banished earl. The time was fast approaching when no earl would defend a burgher against injustice. One system of government is melting into another system. Antiquarians, who look upon an old tower like that of Conisborough, on the Don, dispute whether it be of Saxon or Norman origin. It probably belongs to the border-time of each epoch. So the political histories of two periods that we are accustomed to regard as having distinct attributes, are now gradually blending. The Norman influence is ripening into Norman despotism.



Conisborough Castle.



Confessor's Chapel, Westminster Abbey.

CHAPTER XIII.

William of Normandy—Return of Godwin—Death of Godwin—Harold—Harold in Normandy—Harold returns to England—Banishment of Tostig—Death of Edward the Confessor—Harold chosen king—Norman preparations for invasion—Landing of Duke William—Battle of Stamford-Bridge—Battle of Hastings—The Abbey of Bataille—Burial of Harold—Close of the Saxon period.

When Canute leapt into the English throne, and married the widow of Ethelred, her brother Richard II. became the protector of her two sons by her first marriage; and they remained under his guardianship till his death, about 1026. His eldest son, Richard III., succeeded to the dukedom; but he soon gave place to his brother Robert. Whether Richard were murderously thrust from his crown and from his life by his younger brother, is matter of doubtful history; but that brother was for ten years the bold and powerful duke, who is sometimes styled "Robert the Magnificent," and more commonly "Robert the Devil." He was favourable to the pretensions of his cousins, Alfred and Ethelred; for he fitted out a fleet for the invasion of England, to place them in the sovereignty which Canute had usurped. But his armament

was driven back by a tempest; and he changed its direction, to enforce the submission of Alan, of Brittany. He then went upon a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Before his departure, he presented to the nobles a little boy who he said was his son; and told them that his "little bastard" should be their lord if he saw them no more. He died in Bithynia, in 1035, the same year in which Canute died.

The young William of Normandy was placed under the care of Henry I. of France. At the death of Robert he was put in possession of his father's dominions; and the seat of his court was Rouen. Edward of England and William of Normandy were second-cousins; but the very difference of their ages would have been enough to have prevented much intercourse between them. Edward was called to his kingdom, in 1042, seven years after the death of Robert. William was a youth of fourteen, and from the time of his accession, the great duchy was distracted by the contests of the nobles, and by the pretensions to the sovereign power of Guido, Count of Macon. But there was an energetic will maturing in the boy, whose illegitimacy his father had been proud to proclaim, according to the morality of those times; and he fought against Guido, and conquered in a great battle in 1047. In a year or two he had consolidated his power; and in 1051 was free to visit his cousin Edward in England.

Here then, in all the vigour of youthful manhood, came William of Normandy, to look upon the rich lands, and to understand something of the rough people over whom his feeble relative was the nominal ruler. In the fields through which he travelled, he saw an industrious race, churls and slaves, cultivating diligently, and not without skill, after the modes of their predecessors. In the towns he saw busy artisans, who were associated for mutual protection, and had their peculiar laws, handed down in code after code, but with little essential change in their principles. He saw powerful earls—bold, bearded men—who were great landed possessors, but not holding their arable and their pastures, their woods and waters, as fiefs of the crown, but as independent lords, and tyrannising, wherever they dared, in a most kingly fashion. He saw cathedrals and abbeys, built in a rude style, but splendidly endowed by the piety of the faithful. He heard on every side a tongue which sounded harsh to his ears—a tongue which his own people called barbarous and unfit for gentlemen. The same language, with slight difference, was spoken by the thirty thousand warriors whom Rollo planted a century and a half before, where he now ruled; but it was now the "abhorred English idiom." He saw a land that arms might win, and a people that craft might denationalise. He might be the peaceful successor of Edward, or he might fight for the crown against some pretender, when the childless king should be no more. William sojourned a little while at the court of Edward; and he there found ample encouragement for his ambition, and ready instruments of his will, when the fortunate hour should come. When that hour came, the laws of rude Germanic tribes should be changed for the Roman code. The turbulent earls and sheriffs should be supplanted by his own obedient vassals. The cathedrals and abbeys should be filled by intelligent Norman priests. The language of the Saxon should be supplanted by the refined Norman-French, in which the romances of his poets were sung, and the judgments of his clerks were delivered. "He was a stark

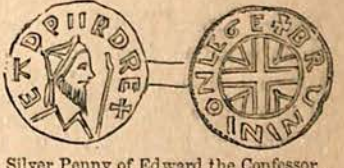
man," said one who knew him—that is, he was a man of inflexible purpose There can be little doubt that his purpose was to possess England. Ingulphus says that he kept his views perfectly secret. Such men never make false confidences. His work was in great part done. Godwin and his sons, who represented the nationality of England, were banished. The king had a Norman court about him. Most of the few strongholds had Norman governors, and were garrisoned by Norman men-at-arms. The honest policy of the Anglo-Saxons did not repress foreign settlers, and there were Normans in every town. The nobles and the franklins, the burghers and the churls, were full feeders and late wassailers. They were a people to be first conquered, and then plundered.

The subjection of England was not quite so near its accomplishment as the condition of the country, in 1051, might have led William to expect. Godwin and his sons were banished. The old earl's domains were in the hands of the king, and of Odda the Norman; and Harold's earldom was bestowed upon Algar, the son of Leofric. But banishment and confiscation were of little avail, as long as those bold men could command the sympathies of their countrymen. In 1052, Harold and Leofwine sailed from Ireland, and entered the Severn. They landed, and defeated the opposing thanes, whose districts they ravaged. Godwin, in the meantime, had fitted out a fleet from Flanders, and found all the mariners of the coast, and all the people of his old earldom, ready to follow his bidding. Harold came round the coast, and joined his father at Portland. They seized upon the king's ships; they received hostages; they obtained supplies wherever they touched. At length they sailed up the Thames, and found the people of Southwark favourable to their cause. The king had ships in the river, and an army near at hand. But the disposition of the people was too manifest to permit him now to resist the demand that Godwin and his sons should be restored to their possessions and their dignities. Where the great thoroughfare from the west to the east of the most populous city of the earth—a road all too narrow for the daily crush of the thousands who pour along it—is now deafening with the din of never-resting wheels, then, upon that pebbly Strand, with field and forest behind, broke the silent wave of the tidal river; and there, were drawn up, in order of battle, the forces of the insurgent chiefs. Their demand was not unreasonable, on the part of men who had a superiority of physical force, and whose cause was so popular. The king at length yielded. Then the Normans, who were with the army and the king, hastily fled. The witan was assembled; and decreed the restoration of the earls, and held them innocent of the acts and designs which had been imputed to them. The greater number of the foreign advisers of Edward were declared outlaws. The joy of the Anglo-Saxon race was unbounded. They had achieved a great triumph with little bloodshed.

Within a year after his restoration the energetic and sagacious Godwin died. The circumstances of his death have been related by the Norman historians, so as to revive the old imputation that he was the murderer of Prince Alfred. The king was banqueting at Windsor. This was not the Windsor which is now so rich with historical associations—not "the proud keep," which looks down upon the valley of the Thames, with "its kindred and coeval towers"—but the present Old Windsor, a royal house, in the

fertile plain skirted by the river, where the Saxon kings went forth to meet their people in Runemed, the Council-meadow. At the king's banquet sat Godwin, in the house where his daughter was again the queen. Edward, in a dispute, hinted that the earl was accessary to the death of his brother Alfred. He stood up to aver his innocence, and fell speechless to the earth. Other writers say, that he invoked Heaven to choke him by the bread which he was about to swallow, if that guilt were his; and that he was choked.

The death of Godwin was, we may believe, a public calamity. There was wanting a strong hand to direct the central power in its due control of separate authorities. The great earls were bringing back the country to that condition of misrule which existed before the days of Egbert and Alfred. The earls were no longer the ministers of the king. The Danish "jarl" had superseded the Saxon "ealdorman;" and the wearers of the new title were really district kings. The quarrel between Saxon and Norman had been laid aside for a season; but the ambitious chieftains were quarrelling amongst themselves. We cannot follow the minute historians in their narratives of the contests between the house of Leofric and the house of Godwin. When Harold vacated the earldom of East Anglia it was bestowed upon Algar, the son of Leofric. He was soon expelled upon a charge of treason. He fled to Griffith, king of Wales, and their united forces ravaged Herefordshire. Harold drove them back. Without any ostensible cause the outlawry of Algar was reversed. He was a second time banished, but he then recovered his possessions by force of arms. Tostig, the brother of Harold, had obtained Northumbria, upon the death of Siward. But he was too violent an oppressor, and his land was not tranquil. Edward might well look with dismay to the time when he should no longer be a barrier, however feeble, to the ruin which would come out of rival factions. There was a legitimate heir to the throne in Hungary—Edward, the son of the brave Ironside. He was induced to come to England, and he came with a wife and three children. His death very soon followed his arrival. His child, Edgar, was now the last male of the race of Cerdic. There was little hope of a legitimate succession.



Silver Penny of Edward the Confessor.

We are now reaching a point of history in which the narratives greatly vary, according to the national prejudices of the relators. The story, as it is told by the Norman chroniclers, has a coherence which gives it the semblance, if not the reality, of truth. There is, moreover, a picture-history of the events which we are about to relate. The famous Bayeux Tapestry, a roll of brownish linen-cloth worked with coloured thread, with figures and letters perfectly bright and distinct, is a roll twenty inches broad and two hundred and fourteen feet in length. The various figures have no perspective; but it has the artistical merit of constantly preserving the resemblance of individuals and classes. The same figure always represents Duke William; and the same moustached warriors always represent the Saxons. Of the antiquity of this remarkable record there is little doubt; and it has been said of it, "If the Bayeux Tapestry be not history of the first class, it is perhaps something

better." It is, however, a Norman history; and illustrates the circumstances of the most important period of our annals as they presented themselves to the Norman mind. We must receive these relations, whether of chronicle or picture, with due caution.

In the year 1065 Harold is practically the foremost man of England. He has won the king to the endurance of his power, and has almost commanded his confidence and affection. That he was ambitious, to the utmost reach of ambition, is sufficiently manifest. His bravery and military talent were undoubted. He was the idol of the Saxon race. He had subdued the British people to his fealty by the terror of his arms. The Northumbrians were, he might believe, unequal to contend with him in any great contest for supremacy. That he looked to the crown of England on the death of Edward was a natural result of his character and his position. He had the energy of the warrior, but he had also the forethought of the politician. It is said that he kept Edward the Atheling from the presence of his uncle; that he procured the banishment of Algar. We would not speak unkindly of Harold. He had great and noble qualities. He was formed for the re-regeneration of his countrymen, by upholding them against a foreign yoke, and by defending them against domestic oppression. We hear of the licentiousness of his brother Sweyn, and the tyranny of his brother Tostig, but no voice is lifted against Harold. To be merely brave and generous; to assert his pre-eminence over brute courage and sordid craft by the impulses of his own nature, was to put himself in danger. He became, at the court of Edward, the supple friend. He was gentle and submissive to the weak master over whom his father held a stern government. When Wales was at his mercy in 1065, "he ordered a great building to be erected in the country of the Welsh, at a place which is called Portaseith [near Chepstow]; and many things for eating and drinking to be there collected, that his lord, King Edward, might be enabled to stay there sometimes for the sake of hunting." * It is tolerably clear that he was cautiously working upon the mind of the king to make him his successor. Edward, even with his infirmity of purpose, would see the danger of bringing a ruler upon England, who would be as hateful to them as the courtiers he had been compelled to drive away. He would see the almost equal danger of raising up one great noble to the sovereign dignity, whilst others, almost as powerful, were passed by. But the last thing he would do, would be to send a message to William of Normandy, by Harold of Wessex, that William was to fill the throne of England. Yet this message, some of the Norman chroniclers say, he so sent. The Anglo-Saxon authorities are silent in the matter. Other authorities state that Edward warned Harold of the danger of putting himself into the power of the Norman duke. Harold's ostensible reason for going, was to redeem his young brother Ulnoth, and his nephew, who had both been confided to William, when Godwin gave them as hostages upon the conclusion of his revolt. They had been detained in Normandy, though not ill-treated. The motive for Harold's journey was natural and honourable; and he might not be unwilling to measure his intellectual strength with one who was marked as his rival. Fear was unknown to him. The ingenious historian of the Bayeux Tapestry had as much adroitness in the exhibition of minute circumstances, as have the picture

* Roger de Hoveden.

chroniclers of our own times. We see in that lady's work, whether of palace or monastery, a king sitting in a chair of state, over whose head is written, "Edwardus Rex." He is addressing two persons. This is Harold, it is held, with a companion, taking leave of the king. We next see Harold, as the inscription testifies, on the road to his manor of Bosham, in Sussex. He rides, as becomes a great duke, with his falcon on his hand, and his dogs leaping before him, and horsemen in his train. He next enters a church, not unmindful of one great duty. But the manners would not be Saxon, if a picture did not show him, or his followers, at a banquet. He goes on ship-board; but his dog is under his arm, and his hawk is on his wrist. His ship is then coming to anchor. The crew are impatiently gazing, and a sailor is on the mast. They have been driven by a tempest on the coast near the mouth of the Somme.

Saxon Feast. (Bayeux Tapestry.)

Guy, the Count of Ponthieu, is lord of that territory. He has no personal enmity to Harold; but he has a strong desire to possess himself of his equipments—his armour and his jewels, his embroidered mantles and his well-stocked purses. The count, too, will have ransom for his prisoner; and he shuts him up in a fortress near Montreuil. All this the lord of Ponthieu did, according to the feudal laws of hospitality. Harold had little hope of immediate escape; but he found a ransomer in Duke William. Upon his release from Montreuil, Harold goes on to Rouen. There he is welcomed with the most lavish generosity. The secret rivals become the warmest friends. Harold followed William to his war with Conan, a count of Brittany; and William honoured him with splendid gifts of arms and horses. These things the chronicles and the tapestry duly record. The duke frankly promised the surrender of Ulnoth and the son of Sweyn. It was a time of feasting and pageantry, of dangerous battle and more dangerous tranquillity. In that noble city, where the Englishman delights to gaze upon the quaint gables that have stood through many generations, and to believe that some of his Norman kings might have rested beneath these roofs, or worshipped in those churches, whose grandeur and beauty are scarcely surpassed by his own cathedrals—there, where the quays of the Seine are loaded with the cotton-bags of America, and the chimneys of the factories send their heavy smoke over its green islets,—was Harold led by his host in stately procession with knight and bishop, or sailed with him in his pleasure-barge on the broad river to the sound of flute or sackbut. The brawling revel of the Saxon palaces was not there. Ladies sat not long, as at the coarse Saxon feasts, amidst the ribaldry of the drinking-horn. But when a temperate repast was quickly ended, in flower-garden or in tapestried hall the lute was heard; and the romancer sang of the deeds of Roland and Charlemagne, whilst warriors whispered of love to not unwilling ears. In such scenes, say the chroniclers,

and more emphatically the poets, was Harold subdued by the conqueror's fair daughter, Adeliza.*

Robert Brunne, in his Chronicle, says of William and Harold, "tales together they told, ilk on a good palfrey." William would tell of some knightly feat; and then compare it with the courage and humanity of the son of Godwin, who saved the lives of Norman soldiers, as they were sinking in the quicksands of the river of Couesnon, when they crossed together to fight in Brittany. Harold would speak of Norman chivalry; and of his own pride at having received his spurs from the hand of William. They talked of England; and the duke said that when he and Edward were living under the same roof in Normandy, Edward had affirmed that if ever he became king of England, William should be his successor. The timid man of forty was making this promise to the bold boy of fourteen, if we are to believe the Norman chronicles. William then asked whether Harold would support him in realising that promise. The Saxon was in his power. These were not times when ambition was easily surrendered to conscientiousness. Harold assented. But his assent was to be more solemnly enforced. He was to swear. He did swear. But he swore with a mental reservation. The Bayeux Tapestry shows in what manner he did swear. The duke sits upon his chair of state, with his sword in his hand. Before him stands Harold, between two ornamental pedestals, upon the top of which he places his fingers. He is swearing upon common reliquaries, as he thought; such as parish priests in England kept upon their altars, to command the faith of ignorant boors. He swears. But under the reliquaries are hidden, by a cloth of gold, the bones of saints and holy martyrs. William then commands the cloth to be removed; and Harold turns pale when he knows the supersanctity of the oath which he had taken.

William of Normandy

This strange story is in perfect accordance with the character of the age in which these men lived. It argues nothing against the peculiar narrowness of his mind that could conceive of this method of making an oath sacred; or of his impiety who would shudder at the force of an obligation, in the presence of dust and ashes, which would sit lightly upon him if simply made in the presence of the Most High. But it shows how far true religion was separated from the superstitions that passed for religion; and how the strongest minds were then subjected to influences which still remain, in some modified form or other, to prostrate the weakest.

Harold, at length, returned to England. In that voyage across the narrow sea he had lost much. He had lost his future freedom of action. He would be false to his oath; or he would surrender his nationality to a crafty and

* The scene and its manners are beautifully set forth in Mr. Taylor's poem, "The Eve of the Conquest."

imperious lord. The season of his return was not one of inaction for Harold. His brother Tostig and William of Normandy had married sisters,—the daughters of Baldwin, Count of Flanders. In his earldom of Northumbria, Tostig was most tyrannous and oppressive, even beyond the usual oppression which others of these petty kings exercised over their people. We may

Harold's Oath to William.

know what was the general nature of this oppression from the story of Godiva. A true poet has told that story with more than historic fidelity.* We see the gentle woman appealing to her grim lord, Leofric, to remit a tax upon the people of Coventry :

"She told him of their tears,
And pray'd him, 'If they pay this tax, they starve.'"

And so, to procure the remission of the tax, she did her lord's imperious bidding; and

"Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity."

It was the rapacity of the great earls that, amongst many other evils of misrule, made the country weak and demoralised. But Tostig went beyond the enormities of most of the grasping and licentious nobles, "who made a prey of the common people," as Malmesbury writes. The people of Northumbria rose against his power, drove him from York, and chose Morcar, one of the sons of Leofric, as their chief. The whole country was in alarm; and Harold was deputed to put down the insurrection. The fraternal bond —the pride of family which would shrink from the elevation of a son of Leofric over his own house—might have moved Harold to

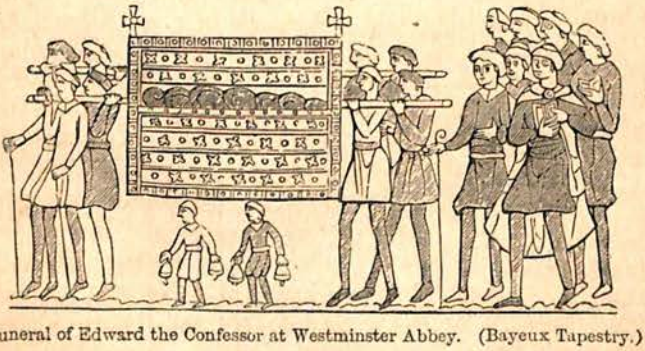
The Confessor's Abbey of Westminster.

* Tenyson's "Godiva."

throw his whole military strength into the contest. But he summoned the insurgent people to a conference. They stated their wrongs. He tried to extenuate the deeds of Tostig, and to plead for his restoration. "We were born free," said the Northumbrians. "We were brought up in freedom. We will have no tyrant." Harold returned to the king without striking a blow; and he brought back to the insurgents pardon and peace. Tostig fled to Flanders; and became Harold's implacable enemy.

Upon the banishment of Tostig, Harold contracted a marriage of policy. He married the daughter of Algar; she being the widow of Griffith, king of Wales, whose sons had succeeded to the kingdom. He was thus placed in alliance with two of the most powerful of the other chieftains. The king was old, and more than ever enfeebled. His great desire was to complete his abbey-church of Westminster. Close by that abbey was his palace. Here the gentle Edward died on the 5th of January, 1066. A few fragments are left of that palace, upon the site of which another palace of Westminster has arisen. The new palace has its political foundations firmly based upon the old institutions of which "the Confessor" was the head. A more splendid abbey-church was raised up under the Norman kings than that in which "the Confessor" had his last resting-place. But a few heavy and discoloured arches, amidst the architecture of a later age, stand as memorials of the ancient building; and in what is still called "The Confessor's Chapel," is a shrine, in which are the ashes of the last of the lineal descendants of that strenuous race of kings, who first, in 519, "obtained the kingdom of the West Saxons."

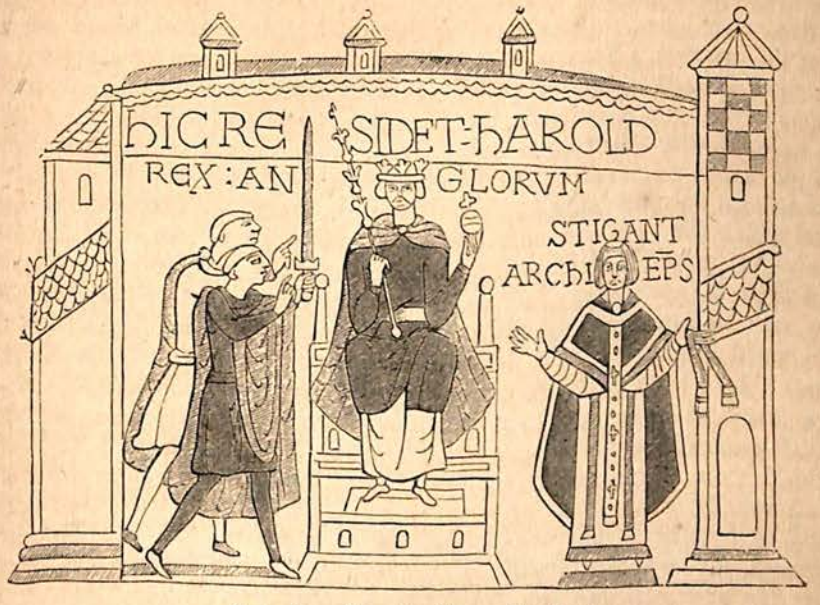
The Bayeux Tapestry, continuing its history, shows us the sickness and death of Edward, and his funeral procession to the abbey-church which he built. It carries on the picture narrative by two simple representations. Harold stands with his plain battle-axe in his hand, while one man offers



Funeral of Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey. (Bayeux Tapestry.)

him a crown, and another a battle-axe having a cross at the junction of the handle with the blade. The inscription says, "They gave the crown to king Harold." "They" were the witan. Some of the chroniclers, amongst others Hoveden, state, that before his decease the king appointed Harold his successor. The fact is generally admitted; but it is coupled by others with a statement that the nomination was extorted from the dying Edward by the importunities of Harold and his partisans. The Saxon king was crowned on

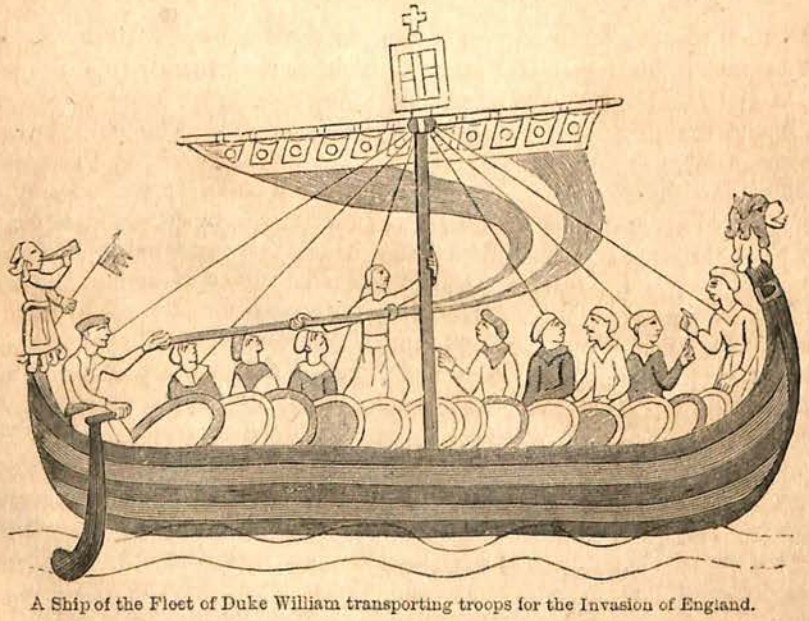
the day of Edward's burial, by the Saxon archbishop Stigand, who had been raised to the see of Canterbury when the monk of Jumièges was expelled. Stigand was never acknowledged by the papal power, and his support of Harold was a new offence to Rome.



Coronation of Harold. (Bayeux Tapestry.)

Duke William is in his city of Rouen, in the January of 1066. He goes forth to hunt in his forest of Rouvray. Princes have their "toys of age" as well as the humbler; and William had a new bow in his hand, of which he was trying the power. A messenger comes in haste. The duke hears his message; throws down the bow; hastily repasses the Seine; and strides into his hall. No one dare speak, for he clenches his teeth; stalks up and down with unequal steps; and half draws his sword from its sheath. He has had news from England; and all Rouen has heard the same news. Edward is dead; Harold fills his throne. But William is a man of action, and wastes no time in impotent rage. His envoy departs for Rome, to ask that Nicholas II. should put England under interdict—the England that had chosen a perjurer for king; that had expelled a Norman archbishop whom Rome had consecrated; that had ceased to pay the "Peter's pence," which her pious kings of old had willingly given. The duke secured the aid of Rome. He was not so successful with the king of France, whose aid he implored in his projected assertion of a right to the English crown, on the promise of Edward. Philip of France thought his imperious vassal somewhat too powerful already. Baldwin of Flanders, his brother-in-law, was equally indisposed to assist him in his enterprise. Conan, then duke of Brittany, after William had for some time announced his design, declared war against him, claiming Normandy as his own. Conan paid the penalty of his rashness. He died by poison. William had still to surmount difficulties with his own

people. He called a great council at his castle of Lillebonne. About two miles from the eastern bank of the Seine, near Quillebœuf, is the old town of Lillebonne, with its Roman amphitheatre and other spoils of time; and near the town is "Le Manoir de Guillaume Conquerant." A lofty circular tower is the principal remain of the ancient palace. On this spot were assembled warriors, churchmen, burghers, when the duke told them of his plans, and asked for their aid. They retired to deliberate. Fierce was the debate; and though Fitz Osbert, the seneschal of Normandy, urged their compliance, and misrepresented their opinions when they again had audience, they sturdily refused what William asked. They would give no double knight's service. They would defend their own country; but they would not aid their duke in making a conquest of a land beyond the sea. William found out a secret which has been transmitted to later times. Those who were obstinate in a public assembly were pliant enough in private negotiation. Gold did more than the eloquence of Fitz Osbert. Then went forth a proclamation, that, supported by the Holy Father of Christendom, who had sent to him a consecrated banner, William, Duke of Normandy, was about to demand, by force of arms, his rightful inheritance of England; and that all who would serve him with spear, sword, or cross-bow, should be amply rewarded. At this call gathered together all the adventurers of Western Europe. They came in crowds from Maine and Anjou, from Poitou and Brittany, from Aquitaine and Burgundy, from France and Flanders. They should have land; they should have money; they should wed Saxon heiresses; the humblest foot-soldier should be a gentleman. The summer of 1066 was almost passed before the preparations were complete. A large fleet had assembled at the

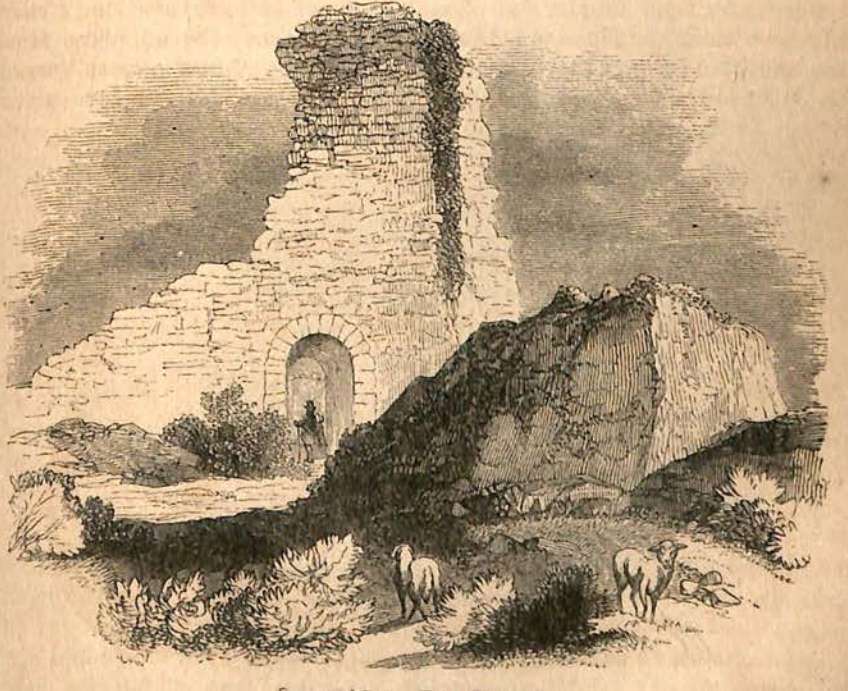


A Ship of the Fleet of Duke William transporting troops for the Invasion of England.

beginning of September at the mouth of the Dive. We come again to our picture-history, and we see men cutting down trees, and others building

vessels. Another section of the needle-work shows us how the ships were moved to the sea, by men dragging them with ropes. They were not ships that rushed from their stocks like loosened castles; but small transports, scarcely larger than a fishing-smack. Their whole number is stated to have been nine hundred and ninety-seven. The fleet was detained for a month by contrary winds, and had been driven from the mouth of the Dive to the mouth of the Somme. The troops landed and encamped at Saint Valery. The rain poured down; the hurricane drove dismasted vessels on the shore; the Norman soldiers murmured and said "God is against us."

The Duke understood the temper of his men. In solemn procession through the camp was borne the shrine which contained the relics of Saint Valery; and the army knelt before the shrine, and made offerings to the priests. The next day the clouds were less lowering. At night the wind changed. On the morning of the 27th of September, the sun was gilding the calmer waves of the channel. The tents were struck; the embarkation commenced; and before evening the fleet had weighed anchor, amidst the shouts of men and the braying of trumpets. The vessel of William led the way; and he outsailed the fleet. After some anxiety, for the ships were widely dispersed, they were again together on the morning of the 28th September. "He passed the sea in a great ship and came to Pevensey." So



Supposed Saxon Keep, Pevensey.

says the inscription on the tapestry. There, on the flat beach, which, seven hundred and fifty years afterwards was to be defended against another invasion by martello towers, William leapt from his boat; and falling to the ground,

a cry went forth that it was an evil omen. He grasped the sand, and turned the omen into a sign of gladness, for he had taken seisin of his kingdom. The castle of Pevensey was at a short distance,—now a ruin, of Roman, Saxon, and Norman construction. In a few days the army marched to Hastings.

King Harold was far away when Duke William landed on that unprotected shore. His exiled brother, Tostig, had been to Normandy, and had arranged with William a plan of united action for the invasion of the country; and he engaged Hardrada, the King of Norway, in the confederacy. Tostig first tried his fortune alone, on the south coast; but the vigilance of Harold drove him to the north. At the mouth of the Tyne, Tostig waited for the Norwegian armament, and their forces having landed, they marched to York. Here they defeated the Northumbrian earls, Edwin and Morcar. Harold was with his army on the southern coast when the news of the Norwegian invasion reached him; and he marched at once to encounter these enemies. He would have negotiated with his brother; but when Tostig asked what the king of Norway should have, the Saxon answered, "Seven feet of earth for a grave." A great battle was fought at Stamford-bridge on the Derwent; and Hardrada and Tostig were amongst the slain. Where this battle was fought, the bones of the dead whitened the earth for half a century. That day of carnage was the same 27th of September on which William sailed from Saint Valery. As Harold sat at a banquet at York, after the victory, the news came of the Norman landing. He had made adequate preparations for a resistance by sea when he marched to the north; but the same tempest that detained the invaders in Normandy compelled the Saxon ships to remain in their ports. They came out too late; and blockaded the whole coast.

The Camp-kitchen at Pevensey.

Harold rested not a day in Northumbria. He marched direct for London; where all the warlike population rallied round his standard. Meanwhile, the Normans had entrenched themselves near Hastings. They had ravaged this beautiful district so mercilessly, that for twenty years it lay waste and desolate. The tapestry exhibits their feastings in this land of fertility, wher the harvest was in the homesteads, and the oxen were fattening in the marsh-lands.

On the 13th October, the army of Harold was encamped on a range of hills, near a place then called Senlac. This is the modern "Battle." The

sea was in the distance, and the English ships were ready to cut off the retreat of the invaders. The army of William was on another range of hills. The watch-fires of each camp could be seen by the other as the night closed in. There was revelry in the English camp. There was silence and prayer in the Norman. The historians have put a long harangue into the mouth of William, when he mounted his horse at day-break of the 14th. They are as genuine as the speeches which we find in Livy. At nine o'clock the Normans moved across the little valley, with the papal banner carried in advance of the Duke.

William I. and Tonstain bearing the Consecrated Banner at the Battle of Hastings. (Bayeux Tapestry.)

They were formidable in their cavalry and their bowmen. The English waited the attack with their battle-axes, the Kentish men in the front. The Anglo-Saxons kept their ground like a mighty wall; and they advanced in the same firm array. This solidity in battle has been the great tactic of the country even to this day; and it belongs to the nature of the people. But it is in the same nature to be open to stratagem. After a fight of six hours, William commanded his men to turn their backs. The English raised a cry of triumph, and, breaking their ranks, rushed from their commanding position into the plain. Then the Norman cavalry wheeled round, and a terrible slaughter took place. Harold fell a little before sunset. There was still a struggle; but the great leader had passed away.

"In Waltham Abbey, on St. Agnes' Eve,
A stately corpse lay stretch'd upon a bier.
The arms were cross'd upon the breast; the face,
Uncover'd, by the taper's trembling light
Show'd dimly the pale majesty severe
Of him whom Death, and not the Norman Duke,
Had conquered; him, the noblest and the last
Of Saxon kings; save one, the noblest he,—
The last of all." *

* "Eve of the Conquest."

Upon the ground where "was tried, by the great assize of God's judgment in battle, the right of power between the English and Norman nations," * the conqueror, within two years, founded an abbey. The old name of Senlac was changed, and this foundation was called "The Abbey of Bataille." The

Burial of Harold.

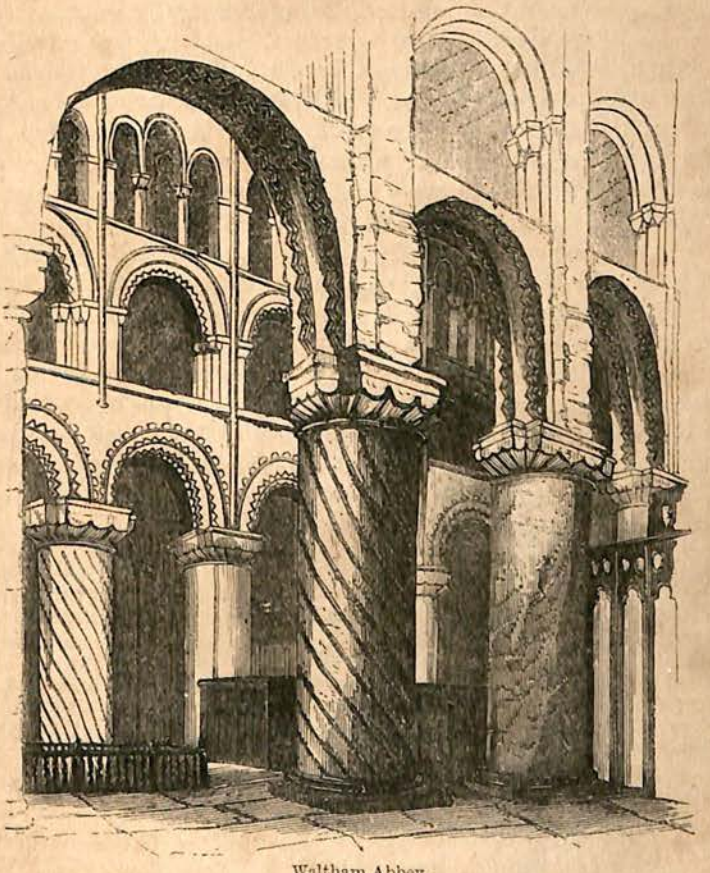
present buildings, so imperfectly preserved, and so miserably defaced, are of a later date. But no changes of time or of irreverent hands can destroy the interest which belongs to this memorable place. Some years ago, after a visit to Battle, the author of this history wrote:—

"The politic conqueror did wisely thus to change the associations, if it were possible, which belonged to this fatal spot. He could not obliterate the remembrance of the 'day of bitterness,' the 'day of death,' the 'day stained with the blood of the brave.' † Even the red soil of Senlac was held, with patriotic superstition, to exude real and fresh blood after a small shower, 'as if intended for a testimony that the voice of so much Christian blood here shed does still cry from the earth to the Lord.' ‡ This Abbey of Bataille is unquestionably a place to be trodden with reverent contemplation by every

* Daniel. † Matthew of Westminster. ‡ William of Newbury.

Englishman who has heard of the great event that here took place, and has traced its greater consequences. He is of the mixed blood of the conquerors and the conquered. His national character is founded upon the union of the Saxon determination and the Norman energy. As he treads the red soil of Senlac, if his reformed faith had not taught him otherwise, he would breathe a petition for all the souls, Saxon and Norman, 'that there slain were.'"

The victory of the Norman was no final triumph of one race over another. The nationality which Harold asserted, in a fight that might have had a different ending had the fatal arrow not pierced his brain, was never lost. The



Waltham Abbey.

language and the laws of the victor only supplanted for a short season, and in a limited range, the old language and the old laws. It was in this spirit of nationality that the Anglo-Saxon people long refused to believe that the last of their kings had perished at Senlac. They believed that his wounds were healed amidst loving friends; that he waited, in some safe seclusion, again to head his faithful English when the hour of deliverance should appear approaching; that their Harold did not sleep in the tomb which was called his tomb in Waltham Abbey.* That abbey, like the Abbey of Bataille, has

* Fuller in his "History of Waltham Abbey," of which he was curate, has the following account of Harold's burial at Waltham:—"Githa, mother of Harold, and two religious men of

been removed to make way for the arches and columns of a later period. But, in the belief that Harold was borne to the great religious house which he had endowed, that venerable church of Waltham will be associated with our national history, whilst the memory is cherished of the brave, whether victorious or subdued, who have fought to the death for their country.

Here, then, is the close of this history of eleven hundred years. It is a history full of doubt and obscurity—a history in which we have to seek the growth of a nation amidst the most conflicting elements, sometimes wondering how they could have given birth to a perdurable state. Out of this British, Roman, Saxon, Danish, Norman stock, has come the English people. Out of these fierce wars, adverse religions, discordant institutions, has come, in the fulfilment of the decrees of an overruling Providence, a nation that has preserved its free spirit under every form of foreign domination or domestic oppression; a nation that in every conflict with authority, whether that of king, noble, or priest, has asserted the right of individual liberty, and has, with constantly increasing strength, upheld the principle that all power is derived from the people for the general good. To the Saxon mind we owe a great part of the English Constitution. It was as rudely developed, in its original stages, as the Saxon tongue. But as that tongue was gradually formed into a language, which has been spread over the earth, and has made new nations, so the Saxon principle of the natural right of each man to do what to him seemeth best, as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others, and the Saxon practice of social co-operation for public objects, have gone forth, and will still go forth, ultimately to banish from the civilised world that despotism which asserts the empire of the few over the many.

this abbey, Osegod and Ailric, with their prayers and tears, hardly prevailed with the Conqueror (at first denying him burial, whose ambition had caused the death of so many) to have Harold's corpse (with his two brethren, Gurth and Leofwine losing their lives in the same battle,) to be entombed in Waltham Church, of his foundation. He was buried where now the Earl of Carlisle's leaden fountain in his garden, then probably the end of the choir, or rather some eastern chapel beyond it; his tomb of plain, but rich gray marble, with what seemeth a cross-fioree (but much descanted on with art) upon the same, supported with pillarets, one pedestal whereof I have in my house. As for his reported epitaph, I purposely omit it, not so much because barbarous (scarce any better in that age), but because not attested, to my apprehension, with sufficient authority." The "reported epitaph" was, HIC JACET HAROLD INFELIX.

WILLIAM I

Great Seal of William the First.

CHAPTER XIV.

Coronation of William I. — Fortresses, and Norman Governors — William goes to Normandy — Oppressions of the Norman Chieftains — Insurrections — William in London — Siege of Exeter—Insurrections in the North, and Danish Invasion—Devastation of Northumbria—Confiscated Properties—The Nobles and the People—The March to Chester — Norman Clergy—Croyland — The Camp of Refuge—The last National Struggle.

FROM the day of his coronation, the 25th of December, 1066, we shall date the commencement of the reign of William I. It has been dated from the death of Edward the Confessor, on the 5th of January in that year; and also from the battle of Hastings, on the 16th of October. The difference appears of little importance; but it really involves a great point of our constitutional history. If the Norman duke won the crown by the victory of Hastings, we may date his accession from the 16th of October. If, more than two months after that eventful day, he was elected king, and, consequently, crowned king, we must date his accession from the day of his coronation. Successful as the arms of William had been, the crown continued elective, as in the Saxon time. His own chaplain, William of Poitiers, says he was "electus in regem," elected king,—which election was followed by his coronation. It was an election, and a coronation, under conditions, thus recorded in the Saxon Chronicle: "Then, on Midwinter's-day, archbishop Aldred hallowed him to king at Westminster, and gave him possession with the books of Christ, and also swore him, ere that he would set the crown upon his head, that he would so well govern this nation as any king before him best did, if

they would be faithful to him." * He did not "so well govern this nation," and this nation was not "faithful to him." Thence came long years of trouble.

"These Saxons, by God's goodness, King Henry the first's favour, their own patience and diligence, put together the planks of their shiprack'd estates, and afterwards recovered a competent condition." Thus writes the quaint old historian of "The Worthies of England." This shipwreck, and this recovery, form the history which we have to work out during the next two centuries.

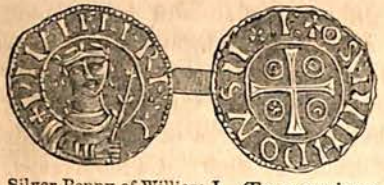
William of Normandy was encamped at Hastings, when he heard that a division of his army, having landed at Romney, had been attacked by the people of that port. William marched to Romney, and revenged himself by a slaughter of its inhabitants. Dover had a strong garrison, and there, around the castle, "built upon a steep rock overhanging the sea," was a large English force collected. The Normans set the town on fire, and the castle was taken. William's army was falling away by sickness. "A great number of soldiers, who devoured flesh-meat half raw, and drank too much water, died of dysentery." † The conqueror waited for reinforcements from Normandy; and at length, leaving the coast, marched along the Watling Street to London.

Some weeks had elapsed since the terrible day of Senlac. The people knew that their Saxon king had fallen; but they were not ready to acknowledge that the foreign winner of one field should be the king of England. There was a lineal descendant of their ancient kings amongst them,—Edgar, the grandson of Edmund Ironside. He was unquestionably the heir to the crown; and the very remote claim of William of Normandy, through his affinity to Emma, the queen of Ethelred, was not to be put in comparison with that of a true son of the race of Cerdic. The sons of Harold had no claims comparable with his; and the pretensions of Edwin and Morcar, the powerful chiefs who were brothers-in-law of Harold, were not founded upon any higher right than that of their Saxon origin. The people of the south, and of London, chose Edgar Atheling as king. It was an unwise choice to oppose a feeble boy to the most ambitious man of his age, at the head of a conquering army. The two great earls of Mercia and Northumbria withdrew to the north. William advanced towards London, and the people exhibited a show of resistance; but they finally made their submission, through the archbishop, and great nobles, who did homage to the invader at Berkhampstead. He was crowned king at Westminster, on Christmas-day. On that occasion, there was a great tumult, which indicated that rival influences and fierce passions could with difficulty be kept in check. Westminster Abbey was surrounded by Norman troops, while the solemn ceremony went forward. Aldred, the archbishop of York, put the question to the English, whether they would have William for their king, and the same question was put by the bishop of Coutances to the Normans; "and the whole assembly loudly gave their willing assent in one voice, though not in one language." ‡ The Norman troops outside, believing, as some of the chroniclers say, that

* See Sir Harris Nicolas' "Chronology of History," pp. 272—279.
† Ordericus Vitalis, Forester's translation, book iii. c. 14.
‡ Ordericus Vitalis.

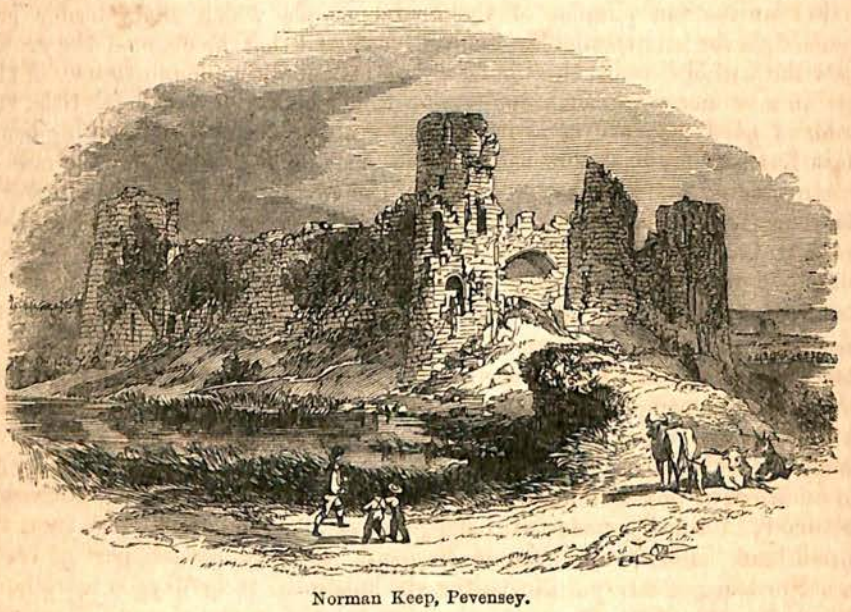
their leader was in danger, when they heard the shouts, set fire to the adjoining houses. The spectators rushed from the abbey. The king and the prelates were left alone at the altar; and in the midst of the din without and the solitude within, William took the usual oath of the Anglo-Saxon kings, and was consecrated by the trembling bishops, himself in great alarm. So writes Ordericus. It is difficult to understand the origin or the object of this tumult. At the previous meeting at Berkhampstead, some of the English nobles and prelates had agreed to receive William as king. Camden says, that they yielded, "victori Normanno multa et magna pollicenti,"—to the victorious Norman on his promising many and great things. This may be conjecture. But the Norman chiefs would have learnt that the ancient rites of the coronation involved the taking of a regal oath which would forbid any arbitrary exercise of sovereign power. We may thus not unreasonably conceive that, at a preconcerted signal, when the form of the people's acclamation had been gone through, the more solemn form of swearing to govern justly as the best of the Anglo-Saxon kings had governed, was to be interrupted. Upon the right of conquest, the Norman soldiers rested their hopes of that unreserved plunder of the Saxon people which their leader had promised them; and though he himself professed that he claimed the crown under the will of Edward the Confessor, and was politic enough to use, in the beginning of his reign, that moderation which belonged to a legal title, the hordes of needy adventurers, who had truly placed the crown upon his head, would have been much more satisfied that he should reign under the law of the strongest. The king, as the events of the two succeeding years will show, was wiser than his followers. The victory of Hastings was not the conquest of the realm. He had a difficult policy to carry through. He had to propitiate the rapacity of his own people; and he had to avert the hatred of those whom he claimed to rule over. The estates of the crown were his; he had confiscated the possessions of the family of Harold. But the domains of those who were strong, such as the great earls of the north, were yet to be held by them in security. He treated Edgar Atheling with kindness; he welcomed some of the chieftains to his court. He exhorted his adherents to moderation. He so regulated the collection of his revenue that the burthen should be equally distributed. He prohibited all riotous assemblies. He provided for the safe passage of traders, and the transport of merchandise by sea and land. But, with all these wise proceedings, the king could not, from the very nature of his position, resist the employment of a stronger arm of government than that of conciliation. He built a fortress to overawe "the fierce and numerous population" of London. He gave the custody of other strongholds to his Norman leaders. In the castle of Winchester, which he erected, he placed William Fitz-Osborn, as lieutenant of the south. His half-brother Odo, bishop of Bayeux, was established at Dover, as governor of Kent. Where the country was considered settled, there the rule was entrusted to Norman chiefs. But scarcely a fourth of England had as yet been offended by these foreign intrusions; and no part had endured any violent change in its tenure of property, or in the ancient laws. The king was now called "Conquestor," or "Conquereur;" but not in our modern sense of "Conqueror." That term involved no idea of the forcible subjection of a people. It signified an "acquirer;" one who had sought and obtained a

right. While the king was present to control his followers, there was quiet, a sullen and enforced repose. The leaders of the people, to some extent, believed in his right intentions. One of that class of country-gentlemen, who, in the middle of the seventeenth century, were well read in the legal antiquities of their nation, says, "It is not imaginable his victory could have made him so absolute as within three months to receive the whole kingdom in peace, had he not joined a fitting moderation with it." * In this moderation the people confided for the security of their homes, and the preservation of their institutions.



Silver Penny of William I. (From specimen in British Museum.)

It is the holy season when the Church, by fasting and humiliation, is preparing for the great festival of Easter. King William has gone to Pevensey, to take ship for his own Normandy. The stipendiary soldiers who had assisted him in his great exploit are here dismissed to their homes, with ample rewards. A train of English and Norman nobles are with him.



Norman Keep, Pevensey.

Edwin and Morcar; Stigand, the archbishop; Edgar; Waltheof; the earls of Northampton and Huntingdon; Ethelnoth, the lord of Canterbury,—these English have come to swell the pomp with which the victor is hailed in his progress. Are they unwilling hostages, or pliant servants of their new master? The duke parades the riches of the kingdom which he has won; and the English chiefs are admired for their graceful persons, and their flowing hair. It is Lent; but the obsequious bishops and abbots receive their sovereign with an anticipation of the festivities of Easter. The festival is kept at Fécamp with unusual magnificence. William's queen, Matilda, is

* "Considerations on the Government of England," by Sir Roger Twysden. Printed for the Camden Society.

the partaker of these splendours. After the gaieties of the court, William employs himself in his peaceful duties. He attends the consecration of churches. He issues ordinances for the public good. The spring, the summer, the autumn are passed, and he is still in Normandy. Modern historians have indulged in speculations why the Conqueror should have risked so long an absence from England. Hume supposes that he was guided by a policy as atrocious as it was dangerous—that, during his absence, his rapacious captains might harass the English into insurrection; and that he might then return, and seize upon the possessions which he had spared under the semblance of a legal administration. There is a much readier solution of the difficulty. In every circumstance that could contribute to his personal gratification, Normandy was to William, as it was to several of his successors, of far more importance than England. It was the country of his birth, and of his education. Its abbeys were more rich, its palaces more sumptuous, its cities more full of stately buildings, than those of England. He was familiar with its language and its laws. The feudal system, which made him the lord of all the Norman territory, was far more agreeable to his views than the Saxon institutions which admitted of free tenures. There was a wide field for his ambition in the extension of his Norman dominions; and the wealth which could be extracted out of the industry of England would furnish new means for the prosecution of that ambition. The possession of England as a province of Normandy must never be relinquished; but to place England above Normandy, by making it the chief seat of the Norman-Anglo government, would be no wise or pleasant policy. The rich lands of the Thames and the Severn would properly be the fiefs of the Norman knights; but their homes should be on the Seine and on the Orne.

During the long absence of the Conqueror from England, his chieftains commenced a system of oppression which might have exterminated a people less bold and enduring than the Anglo-Saxon race. Odo, the bishop of Bayeux, and William Fitz-Osborn, "the king's lieutenants, gave no heed to the reasonable complaints of English subjects, and disdained to weigh them in the balance of equity." * The men-at-arms outrageously robbed the people. The women were exposed to their gross licentiousness. There was no punishment but for those who complained of their wrongs. Such is the testimony of the chronicler we have just quoted; who wrote very soon after these times; and, though born in England, spent the greater part of his life in a Norman monastery. No writer who lived near those days is more honest than this monk of St. Evrault. He was devoted to the glory of Normandy, but he had the feelings of an Englishman; and he expressed them with a frankness which strongly contrasts with the sycophancy with which other Norman chroniclers describe the actions of their powerful men. The tyranny of the invaders drove many of the best and bravest into exile. Then the Anglo-Saxon of Kent and East Anglia became the Varangian of Constantinople. Ordericus has briefly told the story of "the flower of the English youth," who valiantly served in the armies of Alexius, the Greek emperor. Gibbon relates how "a band of adventurous youths resolved to desert a land of slavery; the sea was open to their escape; and, in their long

* Ordericus Vitalis. The only English translation of this interesting "Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy," is that recently completed by Mr. Forester.

pilgrimage, they visited every coast that afforded any hope of liberty and revenge." * There was a band of Scandinavians in the service of the Greek emperors, nearly half a century earlier; and the knowledge of this fact perhaps determined the course of the Saxon exiles. In the decline of his great powers, Walter Scott constructed a romance on this period of Byzantine history. But, unequal as his narrative is, he has drawn no more perfect picture than that of the "tall stranger at the Golden Gate," with his piercing blue eyes, his fair hair, his composed countenance, and his ponderous battle-axe. † The position of Alexius, at the period of the Norman oppression in England, was favourable to this emigration. He was attacked by the Normans under Guiscard; and the Saxon was too happy to prove against the Norman that the battle of Hastings had not been lost through any want of the ancient courage.

Those who thus formed the body-guard of Alexius, and whose posterity are held to have spoken their native English as late as the fifteenth century, ‡ abandoned their country, hopelessly and for ever. But others sought in foreign aid for their country's deliverance. They invited Sweyn, king of Denmark, to repossess the land in which Canute had been king. They invited Count Eustace, once so obnoxious to the Saxon, to seize upon Dover. He came; but his expedition was unsuccessful. In the west the people depended upon themselves. Edric, commonly known as "The Forester"—Edric of the woods—refused obedience to Fitz-Osborn, as Earl of Hereford; and with the aid of the British, held the district against him. The two sons of Harold sailed from Ireland, and ascending the Avon, ravaged the country near Bristol. But the English, though ready to resist the Norman oppression, would not submit to the greater evil of those who, pretending to be deliverers, acted as pirates and marauders. William was alarmed by the news of all this disaffection and disquiet. He hastily left the administration of Normandy to his queen and his son Robert, and sailed from Dieppe for Winchelsea, on the night of the 6th December. He kept his Christmas at London; and assembled around him the English bishops and nobles. "He received each with open arms, gave them the kiss of welcome, and was affable to all." § The archives of London contain a charter, written in Anglo-Saxon, which the city historians say was granted on that occasion: "William the king friendly salutes William the bishop, and Godfrey the portreeve, and all the burgesses within London, both French and English. And I declare that I grant you to be all law-worthy, as you were in the days of King Edward; and I grant that every child shall be his father's heir, after his father's days, and I will not suffer any person to do you wrong. God keep you." ‖ The Londoners were satisfied; and the king departed to carry his arms to the west and to the north.

The year which elapsed from the coronation of William had witnessed no extension of his sovereignty. In the four years which succeeded his return from Normandy, the subjection of the English people was completed. As his power strengthened so did his severity. From 1068 to 1072, the history of the king is the history of the country; and in the development of his character

* "Decline and Fall," vol. vii. p. 123, Smith's edit.
† "Count Robert of Paris."
‡ Gibbon, note 48 to chap. lv.
§ Ordericus Vitalis.
‖ Maitland, "History of London," vol. i. p. 57, ed. 1756.

we trace how he went gradually on from mildness to ferocity; from a show of justice to the most lawless exercise of power; from the ordinary cruelty of a despot to an avidity for blood and devastation, which few tyrants have been able to equal. The course of this man was regulated by the same strong will, whether he moved in gentleness or in terror. He had none of the capricious impulses of ordinary tyrants; and few of the petty jealousies. If a rival were weak, he fed him and flattered him. If a rival were strong, he imprisoned him or murdered him. If a city or a district gracefully yielded after a brief resistance, he asked no forfeiture of life or liberty in its defenders. If resistance were obstinate and universal, there was no punishment short of the extermination of the people, root and branch. One great end he never lost sight of, whether he worked by clemency or by terror—the plunder of the land. "He had fallen into avarice, and greediness he loved withal." * He plundered by direct confiscation and exaction. He plundered through his subordinate plunderers. It is a fearful and disgusting history. It would be humiliating to feel that the people from whom we are sprung did not turn and rend "this very stark man and very savage"—this man "stark beyond all bounds to those who withsaid his will,"—did we not know that no oppression could ultimately subdue this long-suffering race; and that the instruments of their partial subjection were, in little more than a century, united with them in building up a system of government which should, at every new storm of tyranny, become stronger and more defiant.

In studying the original narratives of the four eventful years in which William completed the subjugation of the Saxon race, we cannot withhold our wonder at the surpassing energy of this remarkable man. He is in his forty-second year; capable of enduring the most severe fatigue; utterly regardless of unfavourable seasons; marching with wonderful rapidity from the south to the north, from the west to the east; leaving the high roads, to lead his men, by shorter paths, over barren mountains, and through dangerous fords; always fearless and self-confiding. At the Christmas of 1067 he is feasting in London. In those days the climate of England,—then covered with thick forests and dreary marshes, and with rivers overflowing their banks,—was far colder in the winter and spring, than in the cultivated England of our time. Yet William waited not for sunny days to march into districts where his Normans had yet established no dominion. In January his army is before Exeter—the walled city which had been growing into great importance since the time of Athelstan. The burghers had fortified it with towers and entrenchments; and had gathered forces from other places of Devon and Cornwall, to oppose the foreign king. William had sent messengers to demand their allegiance; and they replied,—"We will neither swear allegiance to the king, nor admit him within our walls; but will pay him tax, such as we have been wont to pay;" and William replied, "It does not suit me to have subjects on such conditions." The men of Exeter were bold, and they fought stoutly for eighteen days. But they finally surrendered. William displayed exemplary moderation. He saved the city from pillage, and he made no immediate confiscations. But he planted a garrison within the walls; and the castle of Rougemont was built out of the ruins of forty-eight houses which had been destroyed in the siege. The king marched into

* Saxon Chronicle.

Cornwall, where he met no resistance. Easter fell that year on the 23rd of March, and he celebrated the festival at Winchester. At Whitsuntide, his queen Matilda, who had arrived from Normandy, was crowned in that city. But in that royal seat of the Saxon race, rich in accumulated treasures, and filled with an industrious population, William did not long tarry. Edwin of Northumbria had, with his brother Morcar, given his adhesion to the Norman; and he was tempted, as Harold was tempted, by the charms of a daughter of the great duke. William, in the early days of his new and doubtful sovereignty, had promised this lady to the powerful earl. But when he became more secure, William "refused to give him the princess who was the object of his desire, and for whom he had long waited." * The brothers, indignant at the promise-breaker, summoned the English and Welch to their standard; and sent their messengers in every quarter to rouse the people to rebellion. The provinces beyond the Humber were the first to rise. But the prompt vigour of the king put down the insurrection before it became general. Edwin and Morcar submitted; and William made a show of favour and forgiveness. He was scarcely strong enough to punish. But during this expedition, he planted a line of fortresses, to overawe the people in the settled districts, and to arrest the advance of those who were not yet under the yoke. In this year Edgar Atheling fled, with his mother and sisters, to Scotland, and they were received with kindness by Malcolm, the king.

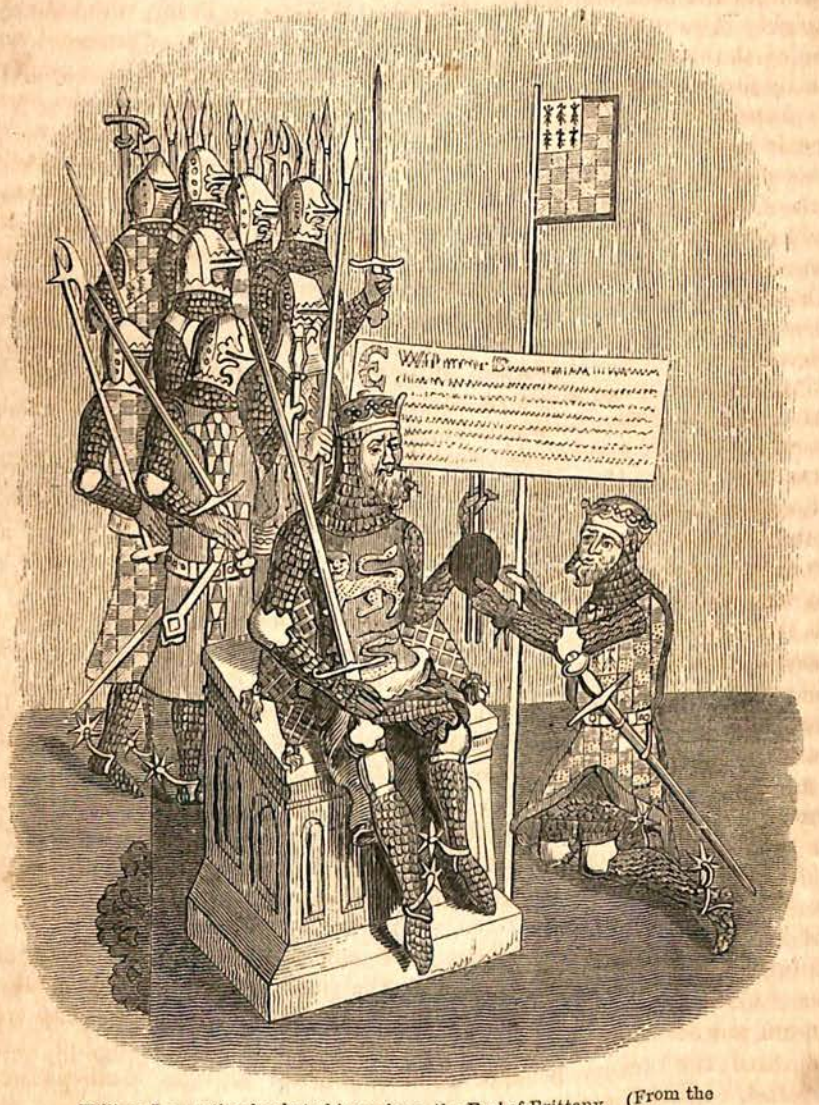
The submission of Edwin and Morcar had not arrested the disaffection of the north. In 1069, wild bands of Saxons were living in tents, having abandoned the towns which were watched and controlled by the Norman garrisons. One of the chiefs of William, Robert de Comines, had received the county of Durham, as his earldom. He entered Durham at the head of five hundred men, took possession of the bishop's palace, and commenced the usual course of spoliation. In the stillness of night, the English gathered together in great numbers; and before day-break burst into the city, set fire to the palace where the intrusive earl and his followers were sleeping after late revelry, and massacred all the Norman soldiers except two. York then rose upon its foreign garrison. These events took place in the beginning of the year. Again the king came in person against the insurgents, and routed them with unsparing slaughter. The queen Matilda, who, at Winchester, had given birth to a prince, afterwards Henry I., now returned to Normandy. It was a time of fearful uncertainty. In June, the sons of Harold again came in force, and landed near Plymouth. They were repulsed. But a more formidable enemy was at hand. For two years, Sweyn, the king of Denmark, had been preparing for an invasion. His son Canute came, with a mighty fleet, in June. These forces were repulsed on the south and eastern coasts; but in August the invaders sailed for the Humber. They were here joined by a fleet under Edgar Atheling, and some English earls. As this army advanced towards York, the Normans in garrison set fire to the houses, and the city was burning for three days. The Normans made a sally upon the Danes and English, who had invested the city, and were utterly defeated with immense loss. William was hunting in the Forest of Dean, when the news of this defeat arrived. He swore, with one of his terrible oaths, that not a Northumbrian should escape his revenge. He had collected about him a new

* Ordericus Vitalis.

body of auxiliary troops, and he marched to the north with an overwhelming force. But he trusted not to force alone. His agents were busy amongst the Danish chiefs; and their powerful army retired to their ships. The English, who had joined the Danes at the Humber, fell back to the Tyne. York was left to be defended by Earl Waltheof alone. The insurrectionary spirit had spread upon the news of the Danish landing, and William had to fight his way through a hostile population in the midland counties. At length he reached Pontefract. The winter was come with rain and snow. The river Aire had become a torrent, and was impassable by boats. Three weeks was the fiery king detained; till at length a ford was found and the army crossed. Their march was through the wild hills and the pathless forests of a district now rich with modes of industry then undreamt of,—by paths so narrow that two soldiers could not walk abreast. He entered York, which he found abandoned. But there he sat down, to spend the festival of Christmas in the organisation of a plan of vengeance that would have better fitted one who had never had the name of the great teacher of mercy on his lips. He dispersed his commanders in separate divisions over a surface of a hundred miles, with orders to destroy every living man, and every article that could minister to the sustenance of life. Houses were to be burnt; the implements of husbandry were to be broken up; the whole district from the Humber to the Tees, from the Wear to the Tyne, was to be made a desert. And it was made a desert. Throughout this region, when, fourteen years after, the survey recorded in Doomsday-book was completed, the lands of Edwin and Morcar were entered as *wasta*—laid waste. Many others belonging to the sees of York and Durham, and to Waltheof, Gospetric, and Siward, the Saxon lords, had the terrible word *wasta* written against them. Malmesbury, writing half a century afterwards, says, "Thus, the resources of a province, once flourishing, were cut off, by fire, slaughter, and devastation. The ground for more than sixty miles, totally uncultivated and unproductive, remains bare to the present day." Ordericus winds up the lamentable story with these words:—"There followed, consequently, so great a scarcity in England in the ensuing years, and severe famine involved the innocent and unarmed population in so much misery, that, in a Christian nation, more than a hundred thousand souls, of both sexes and all ages, perished of want. On many occasions, in the course of the present history, I have been free to extol William according to his merits, but I dare not commend him for an act which levelled both the bad and the good together in one common ruin, by the infliction of a consuming famine. For when I see that innocent children, youths in the prime of their age, and gray-headed old men, perished from hunger, I am more disposed to pity the sorrows and sufferings of the wretched people, than to undertake the hopeless task of screening one by lying flatteries who was guilty of such wholesale massacre. I assert, moreover, that such barbarous homicide could not pass unpunished. The Almighty Judge beholds alike the high and low, scrutinising and punishing the acts of both with equal justice, that his eternal laws may be plain to all."

Detestable as these cruelties appear to us, it is satisfactory to find that they were held in detestation by those who lived near the times in which they were perpetrated. It was not a characteristic of these ages, which we are accustomed to think barbarous, that the monastic writers, who possessed

all the knowledge of the period, should speak with indifference of men eating human flesh, under the pressure of famine; of perishing creatures selling themselves into perpetual slavery to obtain food; of corpses rotting in the highways, because none were left to bury them.* Nor are we quite warranted in believing that the great Norman chieftains, even whilst they received enormous grants of confiscated properties, could look with unmixed satisfaction



William I. granting lands to his nephew, the Earl of Brittany. (From the Registrum Honoris de Richmond.)

upon pasture lands without herds, and arable lands without men to till them. Alain of Brittany, the nephew of the Conqueror, received a grant of all the villages and lands in Yorkshire which belonged to the Saxon earl Edwin, and

* Roger de Hoveden.

here he built the castle of Richmond, whose keep still crowns the high hill round which the Swale has its winding course; where the streets with Norman names still attest the presence of the conquering race; and in which romantic town the charters of the dukes of Brittany, extending over two centuries, are still preserved as the origin of municipal rights and privileges. But Alain of Brittany, once in possession, would have an interest, which no sternness of his imperious lord could control, in gathering around him peaceful cultivators and confiding handicraftsmen. William de Percy, who found that his eighty manors yielded only a tenth of the rent which they produced in the time of the Confessor, would discover some surer means of obtaining rent than by fire and sword. Gilbert de Lacy, who dispossessed all the ancient free proprietors of a great district round Blackburn and Rochdale, and was the sole lord of many servile tenants, would, nevertheless, limit his exactions by some regard to his own interests. Robert d'Omfreville, who, upon the grant of the forest of Riddesdale, swore upon the sword of William that he would clear the country of wolves, and of all the men who were hostile to the conquest, would discover that if his domain were to be of any value, he must be somewhat more merciful than to confound the unquiet men with the wolves as equal enemies. A little while after the very period in which Ordericus has described the devastation of the north, which he calls "the lasting disgrace" of William, he says, speaking, we may believe, of the more settled districts, "the cultivators of the soil renewed their labours in some sort of security;" and he adds, that the English and Normans had begun to intermarry. It is thus that, in spite of wars and revolutions, of tyrannies and confiscations, the eternal laws of Providence in time assert their predominance over the transient efforts of man. The property of England had, in a great degree, changed its masters; but the population of England, wasted as it was, was still there. If the old proprietors were dispossessed, there were still the tenants and the serfs. There were no vast hordes of the Norman peasants crowding over from their own pleasant seats, to thrust out the children of the soil from eating the bread of their laborious poverty. We indeed find mention of the arrival from Gaul of men and their wives, with household accompaniments, such as are recorded in an old ballad:—

"William de Coningsby
Came out of Brittany
With his wife Tiffany
And his maide Maupas
And his dogge Hardigras."

But we doubt whether Thierry does not exaggerate such instances as Coningsby and his wife Tiffany, and Noel and his wife Celestria, when he says, "From the time that the conquest began to prosper, not young soldiers and old warlike chiefs alone, but whole families, men, women, and children, emigrated from every remote district of Gaul to seek their fortunes in England." Had there been any extensive colonisation of this nature, so that the Norman should have dispossessed the Saxon population, as the Saxon had dispossessed the British, the great body of the English nation, in succeeding generations, would have been Norman. "The whole cloth thereof," to use Fuller's words, would have been Norman, instead of that cloth being "guarded (fringed) here and there with some great ones of foreign extraction." The

dominant race were men in armour, who kept their followers for knight-service, but who left to their tenants the inglorious duties of the seed-time and harvest. The church lands were still the undisturbed possessions of the cathedrals and abbeys, though the bishops and abbots might be changed. The ancient churls would still cluster round these tolerant masters and instructors, who, to do them no more than justice, were of higher natures than to be instruments of unprofitable oppression. Trodden down, vilified, despised as was the Saxon race, it had lost the unity of a Nation, but there still was a People.

The rough work of conquest is nearly over. The north is devastated. But the submission of the wretched inhabitants of the north provokes the resentment of Malcolm, king of Scotland, and he becomes their enemy. At the head of an army he crosses the Tyne, and completes the work of devastation. He was, no doubt, fancying that he was asserting the right of Edgar to the crown, and that the pretensions of the Atheling would one day be acknowledged, for he sought Edgar's sister, Margaret, in marriage; and from this alliance came what has been called "The Union of the Races," when Henry I. married Matilda, the daughter of Malcolm and Margaret. From the desolated Yorkshire, William, in the March of 1070, led his army to Chester. Ordericus has given a vivid description of this march: "With unwearied vigour he made his way through roads never before travelled by horses; across lofty mountains and deep valleys, rivers and rapid streams, and dangerous quagmires in the hollows of the hills. Pursuing their track they were often distressed by torrents of rain, sometimes mingled with hail. At times they were reduced to feed on the flesh of horses which perished in the bogs." Where William marched through a desert, there is now the densest population in the world; and not a river that rushes through these beautiful valleys is without the mill-wheel on its banks; and from the hollows of the hills rises a cloud which tells of industry producing national wealth, compared with which all the plunder of Saxon England would be as dust in the balance. At length the king, contending with a mutinous soldiery, who were suffering cold and hunger, and the attacks of hostile marauders, reached Chester, and put down the insurrectionary spirit in Mercia.

At Easter the king is again at Winchester. The Church has had his care. The Saxon prelates he holds unworthy; and the Pope has sent him three legates to assist in the work of purification. Stigand, the archbishop, who had supported Godwin and crowned Harold, was deposed. Other prelates were set aside "for criminal life, and ignorance of pastoral duties." Norman monks took possession of the monasteries, and expelled the Saxon clergy. The Norman lords had their ecclesiastical friends and favourites. Ivo Taillebois ruined the Saxon abbot Ulfketul by his accusations; and the abbey of Croyland was given to Ingulphus, who had been secretary to the Conqueror. He was an Englishman; and we are therefore not surprised to find that, although bred in Normandy, he behaved with a brotherly kindness to his ejected predecessor. "Seeing that this venerable person was worthy of all favour and filial love, and was distinguished for his most holy piety, I had him placed in his ancient stall; nor did I, so long as he lived, consider myself as being fully the husband, but always as a sort of bride-man or steward of the monastery." The Norman bishops and abbots, who gradually

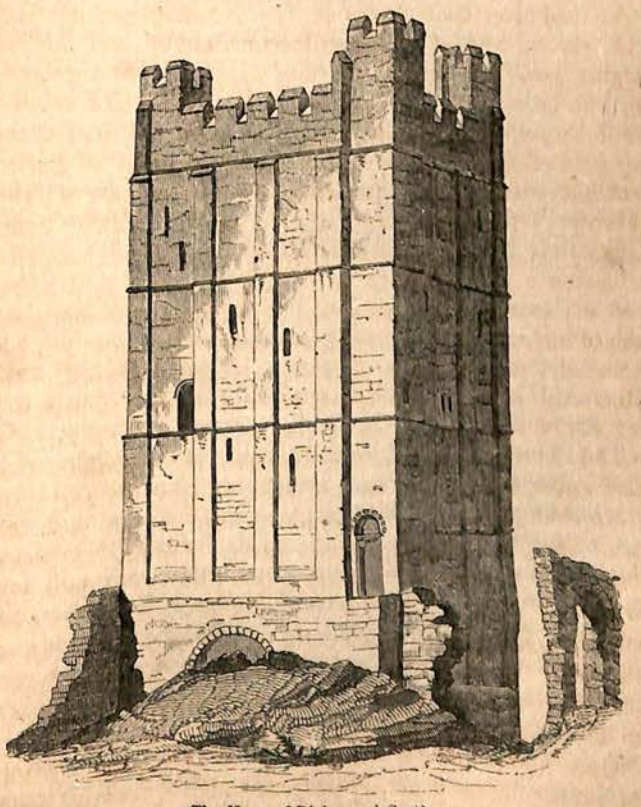
dispossessed the Saxon, were for the most part of loftier and more cultivated minds than the men of war who elevated them to wealth and power. Many who came into vast possessions, employed them in raising magnificent buildings, upon which we still gaze with admiration. They stood between the conqueror and the people, to mitigate their oppression, and to save the property of the Church, which was essentially public property—the inheritance of the lowliest—from the grasp of private rapacity. Ambitious and luxurious as some might be, others were humble and self-denying. One of the most learned of the Norman monks, Guitmond, was offered an English bishopric by William; he replied, "I look upon England as altogether one vast heap of booty, and I am as afraid to touch it and its treasures, as if it were a burning fire." * They were not all as Ordericus has described "some churchmen, who, to appearance, were religious, but constantly followed the court, and became abject flatterers;" and whom, in their elevation, he compares to wolves devouring their flocks. These had a natural fellowship with the adventurers of the laity, whom the same honest Norman depicts as "ignorant upstarts, driven almost mad by their sudden elevation." Such a bloated tyrant was Hugh d'Avranches, constable of Chester, who "set no bounds either to his generosity or his rapacity"—"who wasted his own domains"—and "indulged in gluttony to such a degree as to become so fat that he could scarcely walk." † Another of this class was Ivo Taillebois, whom the people of the fens "supplicated as their lord on their bended knees;" and who, at his good pleasure, "tortured and harassed, worried and annoyed, incarcerated and tormented them." ‡ This mirror of chivalry "would follow the various animals of the people of Croyland in the marshes with his dogs; drive them to a great distance, drown them in the lakes, mutilate some in the tail, others in the ear; while often by breaking the feet and the legs of the beasts of burden, he would render them utterly useless." § Still it would be unjust to believe that such specimens of the "Norman gentleman" constituted the majority of those who had dispossessed the "Saxon barbarian." Ingulphus gives us a very different picture of a Norman, who thought that life had higher duties than to take lance in hand against grumbling churls, and destroy the property of those who had still something to call their own. There was a real agricultural improver in those days, living in the same district where Ivo Taillebois amused himself with laming cattle and hunting swine. Richard de Rulos inclosed the waste marshes of Deeping; shut out the overflowings of the Welland by a great embankment; built within the embankment numerous cottages; and made in the meadow land, which had previously been impassable bogs, quite a pleasure-garden of fertile fields. ‖ The example of this good and sensible Norman changed the character of the great fen district, and the people of Multon, and Weston, and Spalding, "in imitation of those at Deeping, by a common enactment agreed to among them, divided among themselves, man by man, their marshes." ¶ Such were the healing influences that very speedily mitigated the evils of the Conquest. Such is the course of most political revolutions. If the spirit of a people be not wholly trodden out—if their arts and their industry have not wholly perished—if knowledge and religion still throw a gleam over the darkness—if the memory of the

* Ordericus Vitalis. † Ibid. ‡ Ingulphus.
§ Ingulphus. ‖ Ibid. ¶ Ibid.

past inspire hope and endurance—tyranny is only a passing storm which purifies whilst it destroys.

Ingulphus was installed as abbot of Croyland in 1076. Four years before, that region of waste waters encompassing patches of fertility, had been the scene of the last struggle of Saxon nationality. Hereward, as the good monk wrote some twenty years later, had left a fame for undaunted prowess, "as we still hear sung in our streets." He had been exiled under the displeasure of his father, Leofric, the lord of Born, and had fought in foreign lands. After the conquest, his patrimonial possessions had been seized on the death of his father, and his mother was turned out to starve by a foreign minion of the Conqueror. He came to England, collected a band of the friends of his youth, and drove the intruders from his inheritance. Ingulphus presents to us a singular picture of the times, in describing how Hereward, not being a belted knight, repaired to his uncle, the exiled abbot of Peterborough, and there, after solitary watchfulness and prayer in the church from sunset to sunrise, made offering of a sword which the abbot blessed; and laying that sword upon his neck, devoted him to the duties of knighthood. This, the writer says, was the custom of the English; but that the Normans despised this mode of consecration, and held the soldier thus hallowed by the Church to be still a plebeian. According to them, the king, or the lord, must make a knight. But the Saxon knight bore himself as bravely as the noblest of those who had won their spurs in the Norman ranks. He raised the standard of revolt, and drove the foreign abbot and his monks from Peterborough. Ivo Taillebois, the lord of Hoyland, led a great force against Hereward; but he was repulsed again and again. The fame of the Saxon's exploits went through the land, and fugitives gathered from every quarter to his "Camp of Refuge." William had become jealous of Earls Edwin and Morcar, and had commenced a persecution which threatened their personal safety. Morcar fled to the camp of Hereward. Edwin endeavoured to escape to Scotland; but his flight was interrupted through treachery, and he was slain, leading a few followers, as he attempted to ford a swollen river. The head of the young earl was carried to William, who appeared indignant at the death of one who was mourned, not only by English, but by Normans; and he banished those by whom Edwin had been betrayed. With Morcar came to Hereward many an ejected chief, and many a deprived churchman. The isle of Ely, which was the chief seat of Hereward's force, was a surer protection, for a time, against the Norman cavalry than the defiles of Yorkshire, through which William had led his army in the pursuit of the rebellious Northumbrians. But the king, who had at first despised the insurgents of the fens, saw that this was no trifling outbreak which an Ivo Taillebois could put down. William possessed the highest talent for war—that talent which regulates the movements of an army by the most comprehensive view of the physical character of a district, and knows when to fight, and when to employ means more effectual than fighting. The king collected a large naval force in the Wash, and blockaded every arm of the sea that was an inlet to the fens. Wherever a road led into that district, he closed all access by his troops. The camp of Hereward was entrenched in the midst of waters, in some places stagnant and thick with reeds, in others rapid; but in all places dangerous for the passage of horse or foot. He

commenced the building of a great causeway; but at every pile they drove, Hereward came suddenly upon the labourers, and the work made no progress. The Normans said that Hereward was in league with the powers of darkness; and William, to satisfy his followers, called a sorceress to his own aid, and she ascended a wooden tower to be the guardian of the causeway. The Saxons opposed no rival conjurations, but burnt the tower with its witch. Three months did William blockade the Camp of Refuge. At last he found a way more practicable than his bridges. The monks of Ely began to feel the approaching scarcity of the wheaten bread and fresh meat to which they had been accustomed; and they made terms with the king for the discovery of a passage from the fens to the camp. The Norman troops entered the Isle, occupied the monastery, and finally stormed the entrenchments. Resistance was at an end. Morcar became a captive, and the king kept him imprisoned for years. Hereward threw himself into the marshes, and escaping to his own estate, long kept up a partizan warfare. He at length submitted, when a longer struggle was hopeless. The metrical Chronicle of Geoffroy Gaymer recites how he fell fighting, without helm or hauberk, against fifteen Normans. Ingulphus, a more trustworthy historian, says, that having "made peace with the king, and obtained his patrimonial estate, he ended his days in tranquillity, and was very recently, by his especial choice, buried in our monastery by the side of his wife."



The Keep of Richmond Castle.

Interior of the Chapel in the White Tower.

CHAPTER XV.

Revolt of Nobles—Continental Wars—Family Quarrels—General Oath of Fealty—Domesday Book—Classes—Industry—Land—Forests—The New Forest—Gardens—Mills—Mines—Cities and Burghs—Royal and Baronial Manors—Castles—Churches—Knight-service—Feudal Tenures—Feudal Exactions.

ENGLAND at length has rest. The politic conqueror has destroyed the Saxon independence, by force or by cunning. Malcolm of Scotland has submitted to him, and remains at peace. Edgar Atheling has become a pensioner upon the bounty of William, who thrust him from a throne. The people are settling into their old habits of rural industry. Many of the dispossessed and hunted proprietors and tenants of the northern counties had found shelter in Scotland, under the protection of Margaret the queen. The Scottish warrior-king, totally illiterate, was made gentle and devout under the guidance of his noble wife; and the lowland districts beyond the Tyne gradually became more and more Saxon, in their language and manners. At this period, it is probable that no sweeping change had taken place in the laws of England, or the tenure of property. The king had repeated his oaths to maintain the ancient laws; and although there were confiscations of English lands, wherever there had been resistance, and enormous grants to Norman soldiers, the system, founded upon what Mr. Kemble calls "the monstrous fiction that the king is owner of all the land in a country," had not been brought into general usage. The settlers in Normandy under Rollo are described as never bowing the knee to king or lord, but holding

their lands free from service.* The old Germanic constitution of England had not yet sustained the full burden of the yoke of feudality, which had gradually been established in France by the middle of the eleventh century.

While England was under the dominion of the Norman dukes, and was to all intents a tributary state, our historians have commonly bestowed nearly as much attention upon the affairs of Normandy and Maine, of Brittany and Anjou, as upon those of our own country. This arises from the habit of too commonly looking at the history of a king as the history of a nation. Sometimes, indeed, in certain portions of a reign the personal history of the monarch is no untrue representation of the condition of the nation. But, as a general principle, that personal history must be regarded as a very imperfect, and a very unimportant, if not delusive chronicle. "So strong an association is established in most minds between the greatness of a sovereign and the greatness of a nation which he rules, that almost every historian of England has expatiated with a sentiment of exultation on the power and splendour of her foreign masters, and has lamented the decay of that power and splendour as a calamity to our country." † We shall endeavour to avoid this error, and principally to regard the acts of the Norman kings merely as illustrations of the course of events, and the progress of society in England.

William, in 1073, is in Normandy. There was an insurrection in Maine. It would seem that his army was composed of Normans and English; and with a great force he speedily quelled the revolt. But there is again danger in England. Roger Fitz-Osborn, the earl of Hereford, and Ralph de Guader, the earl of Norfolk, had agreed to unite their interests by the marriage of the sister of one to the other. But the king, with that tyrannical interference with the domestic rights of families which prevailed down to the time of the Stuarts, issued his commands that no such marriage should take place. He was absent, and the earls gave no heed to his prohibition. There was a great feast at Norwich; and there came bishops and barons, Saxon as well as Norman, to honour the bridal of Emma with De Guader. It was a time when men spoke out; and the Normans complained bitterly of the interference of the absent king with their private alliances. The Normans complained of his ingratitude; the Saxons of his oppressions. The murmurs ripened into plots. Waltheof, the Saxon earl, was made privy to the conspiracy; but he refused to take any active part in what he conceived a hopeless attempt. He however kept the secret of the Normans. The insurrection broke out, but was speedily subdued. A great battle was fought in Norfolk, before the arrival of William from Normandy. He came to determine the fate of the captive rebels. The Norman leaders were sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. Waltheof was betrayed by his wife—the Conqueror's daughter, Judith; and after lingering a year in prison, was beheaded at Winchester. The Norman archbishop Lanfranc made great efforts to save the Saxon. But the perfidy of Judith, and the rapacity of those followers of William who thirsted for his blood, that they might possess his estates, determined the fate of Waltheof, whose memory was long regarded as that of a martyr.

William returned to Normandy after the revolt of the nobles was

* See the pretended epitaph on Rollo, in Ordericus Vitalis, bk. v. c. 9.

† Macaulay, vol. i. p. 14.

suppressed. For seven or eight years we cannot trace him in England. But the space is filled up by narratives of his continental wars, and his family quarrels. The Norman princes of the blood have no very prepossessing associations belonging to them. Robert is the eldest. Before the conquest of England he had been named as his father's successor in Normandy. Richard, the second son, had been killed in England by an accident whilst hunting. Robert desired to have the crown of Normandy during his father's life, and his father was not at all willing to forego any power. William, the next brother, who was now twenty-one, took part against Robert. Henry was a boy of nine years. The younger brothers were playing at dice in the gallery of a house at Maine, and Robert was beneath. To insult their brother, they threw water on the heads of him and his followers; and the fiery Robert followed his brothers to the banqueting-room in fierce anger. Their father interposed. But the elder son could not forgive the insult, and was soon in arms to enforce his pretensions. The parent and child met in battle; and the son unhorsed the father. Perceiving whom he had at his mercy, the son begged the forgiveness of the parent. But the very stark man would not be fully reconciled; and after a few years of secret hostility they never again met. Odo, the half brother of the king, gave him dire offence by entertaining the ambition of becoming Pope. William seized him as he was sailing from the Isle of Wight, and kept him strictly imprisoned, till death conquered the conqueror. Whilst these turbulent princes are hating and fighting, the lower world goes on in its accustomed round, of the proud and the avaricious oppressing the humble and the contented. There was little difference in the principles by which the selfish accomplished the supremacy over the generous, in those times as compared with ours. They only employed different instruments from those we employ. Yet, after all we read in their chronicles of the power and riches of the ancient tyrants, there was, perhaps, more real happiness in the hut of the "poor old woman of Weston," who, when the monastery of Croyland was burned down, gave the produce of her spindle to sew the garments of the houseless monks,* than in the mansion of Ivo Taillebois, who was evermore their persecutor. We may believe that the satisfaction of Fergus, the coppersmith of Boston, when he gave two bells to the new church of Croyland, was more precious to the simple Christian than the murderous triumph of Tonstain, the Norman abbot, who chased all the Saxon monks out of Glastonbury with sword and lance, because they chanted the service after the fashion of their predecessors.

Under the date of 1085, the Saxon Chronicle has an important passage, which has been considered, by some authorities, to determine the period when the feudal tenures were generally established by a solemn legal act, which was preceded by a general survey of the kingdom. The writer of this portion of the Chronicle was an Englishman, and a man of high position; for in describing the character of William, he says, "If any one wish to know what manner of man he was, or what worship he had, or of how many lands he was the lord, we will describe him, as we have known him; for we looked on him, and some while dwelt in his court." It is conjectured that this chronicler was Wulstan, the only Saxon bishop that was left at that time. This faithful witness records that in the nineteenth year of King William's reign, Canute,

* Ingulphus.

the king of Denmark, was expected to invade England; and that when William, who was then in Normandy, heard this, he came over with a great army of Normans and Bretons—a greater company of horse and foot than had ever before entered the land, insomuch that men wondered how such a host could be fed. He dispersed this army through the country, and they devastated the maritime districts, and the people suffered much by their presence. The invasion being abandoned, the king sent back some of these stipendiaries. The writer then relates, that at Christmas the king was at Gloucester, with his witan, and held his court there for five days, after which the archbishop and clergy held a synod for three days. Then the king called a great council, and had much grave talk concerning the land, how it was held, and by what men. Then he sent his servants through all the country, to make a survey of every possession, and to register every hide of land in every county, and what was the money value, and what cattle were maintained upon each property. The chronicler further relates, that at Lammas, in 1085, the king was at Salisbury; and there came to him his witan, and all the landowners of any account, from all parts of England, whose men soever they were, and they all bowed to him and became his men, and swore to him an oath of fealty, that they would be faithful to him against all other men. It will be desirable, at this period of our narrative, to enter upon some detailed account of this remarkable survey of the kingdom; and to consider what great and long-enduring change was wrought in the country, when the king's witan, or chiefs, and all the land-owners, became the king's immediate vassals, and did homage, and swore the oath of fealty.

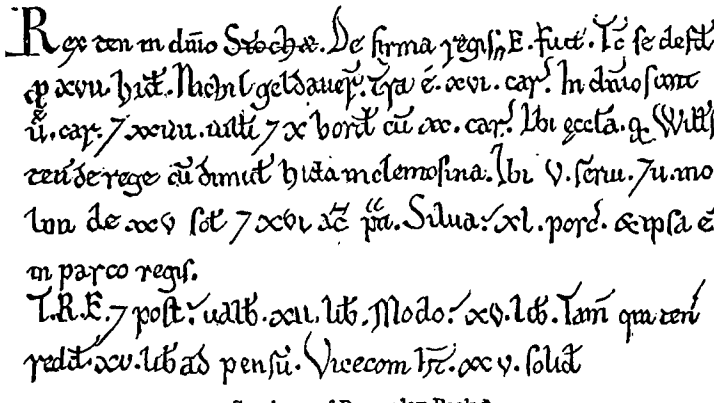
On the left of the passage which leads to the entrance of Westminster Abbey called "Poets' Corner," stands the Chapter-House of the Abbey, hidden by brick tenements, and fitted up within with shelves and closets for public records. Yet this Chapter-House is one of the most beautiful buildings of our country; and was thus desecrated in the time of James I. by some official representative of the ignorant indifference of the people for their national monuments. In one of the closets of this building is locked up the most precious document of English history—the Register of the Survey made under the orders of the Conqueror and his witan, which we have just noticed. This document is called "Domesday Book," and, in fact, consists of two books, of different sizes,—one a folio, the other a quarto,—on the vellum of which the entries are made, in beautifully clear characters. The whole Register, with valuable introductory matter, indices, &c. was printed at the cost of the Government in 1787, in types which represent the contractions of the original with all needful exactness. In the following page is an exact fac-simile of the entry of one of the king's holdings.

The Survey thus contained in this ancient register extended to all England, with the exception of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Durham. All the country between the Tees and the Tyne was held by the bishop of Durham; and he was reputed a count palatine, having a separate government. The other three northern counties were probably so devastated that they were purposely omitted.* Let us first see, from the information of Domesday Book, by "what men" the land was occupied.

First, we have Barons, and we have Thanes. The barons were the

* Introduction to Domesday, by Sir H. Ellis, folio, p. xii.

Norman nobles; the thanes, the Saxon. These were included under the general designation of *liberi homines*, freemen; which term included all the freeholders of a manor. Many of these were tenants of the king "in capite"—that is, they held their possessions direct from the crown. Others



Specimen of Domesday Book.*

of these had placed themselves under the protection of some lord, as the defender of their persons and estates, they paying some stipend or performing some service. In the Register there are also *liberæ feminæ*, free women. Next to the free class were the *sochemanni* or "socmen," a class of inferior land-owners, who held lands under a lord, and owed suit and service in the lord's court; but whose tenure was permanent. They sometimes performed services in husbandry; but those services, as well as their payments, were defined. Descending in the scale, we come to the *Villani*. These were allowed to occupy land at the will of the lord, upon the condition of performing services, uncertain in their amount, and often of the meanest nature. But they could acquire no property in lands or goods; and they were subject to many exactions and oppressions. There are entries in Domesday Book which show that the *villani* were not altogether bondmen; but represented the Saxon "churl." The lowest class were *servi*, slaves; the class corresponding with the Saxon "theow." By a degradation in the condition of the *villani*, and the elevation of that of the *servi*, the two classes were brought gradually nearer together; till at last the military oppression of the Normans thrusting down all degrees of tenants and servants into one common slavery, or at least into strict dependence, one name was adopted for both of them as a generic term, that of *villeins regardant*.†

Of the subdivisions of these great classes, the Register of 1085 affords us some particulars. We find that some of the nobles are described as *milites*, soldiers; and sometimes the *milites* are classed with the inferior orders of tenantry. Many of the chief tenants are distinguished by their offices. We

* This manuscript is thus read: "Rex tenet in Dominio Stochæ. De firma Regis E. fuit. Tunc se defendebat pro 17 Hidis. Nichil geldaverunt. Terra est 16 Carucatæ. In Dominio sunt 2æ Carucatæ & 24 Villani & 10 Bordarij cum 20 Carucis. Ibi Eclesia quæ Willelmus tenet de Rege cum dimidia Hida in Elemosina. Ibi 5 Servi & 2 Molini de 25 sol & 16 Acræ Prati. Silva 40 Porcorum & ipsa est in Parco Regis. T. R. E. & post valebat 12 lib. Modo 15 lib. Tamen qui tenet reddit 15 lib. ad pensum. Vicecomes habet 25 solid."

† Introduction to Domesday.

have amongst these the great regal officers, such as they existed in the Saxon times,—the *camerarius* and *cubicularius*, from whom we have our lord-chamberlain; the *dapifer*, or lord-steward; the *pincerna*, or chief butler; the constable, and the treasurer. We have the hawk-keepers, and the bow-keepers; the providers of the king's carriages, and his standard-bearers. We have lawmen, and legates, and mediciners. We have foresters and hunters. Coming to the inferior officers and artificers we have carpenters, smiths, gold-smiths, farriers, potters, ditchers, launders, armourers, fishermen, millers, bakers, salters, tailors, and barbers. We have mariners, moneyers, minstrels, and watchmen. Of rural occupations, we have the bee-keepers, ploughmen, shepherds, neat-herds, goat-herds, and swine-herds. Here is a population in which there is a large division of labour. The freemen, tenants, villains, slaves, are labouring and deriving sustenance from arable land, meadow, common pasture, wood, and water. The grain-growing land is, of course, carefully registered as to its extent and value, and so the meadow and pasture. An equal exactness is bestowed upon the woods. It was not that the timber was of great commercial value, in a country which possessed such insufficient means of transport; but that the acorns and beech-mast, upon which great herds of swine subsisted, were of essential importance to keep up the supply of food. We constantly find such entries as "a wood for pannage of fifty hogs." There are woods described which will feed a hundred, two hundred, three hundred hogs; and on the Bishop of London's demesne at Fulham a thousand hogs could fatten. The value of a tree was determined by the number of hogs that could lie under it, in the Saxon time; and in this Survey of the Norman period, we find entries of useless woods, and woods without pannage, which to some extent were considered identical. In some of the woods there were patches of cultivated ground, as the entries show, where the tenant had cleared the dense undergrowth, and had his corn land and his meadows. Even the fen lands were of value, for their rents were paid in eels.

There is only mention of five forests in this record, Windsor, Gravelings (Wiltshire), Winburn, Whichwood, and the New Forest. Undoubtedly there were many more, but being no objects of assessment they are passed over. It would be difficult not to associate the memory of the Conqueror with the New Forest; and not to believe that his unbridled will was here the cause of great misery and devastation. Ordericus Vitalis says, speaking of the death of William's second son Richard:—"Learn now, my reader, why the forest in which the young prince was slain, received the name of the New Forest. That part of the country was extremely populous from early times, and full of well-inhabited hamlets and farms. A numerous population cultivated Hampshire with unceasing industry, so that the southern part of the district plentifully supplied Winchester with the products of the land. When William the First ascended the throne of Albion, being a great lover of forests, he laid waste more than sixty parishes, compelling the inhabitants to emigrate to other places, and substituted beasts of the chase for human beings, that he might satisfy his ardour for hunting." There is probably some exaggeration in the statement of the country being "extremely populous from early times." This was an old woody district, called Ytene. No forest was artificially planted, as Voltaire has imagined; but the chases were opened through the

ancient thickets, and hamlets and solitary cottages were demolished. It is a curious fact that some woodland spots in the New Forest have still names, with the terminations of *ham* and *ton*.* There are many evidences of the former existence of human abodes in places now solitary; yet we doubt whether this part of the district plentifully supplied Winchester with food, as Ordericus relates; for it is a sterile district, in most places, fitted for little else than the growth of timber. The lower lands are marsh, and the upper are sand. The Conqueror, says the Saxon Chronicle, "so much loved the high deer as if he had been their father." The first of the Norman kings, and his immediate successors, would not be very scrupulous about the depopulation of a district, if the presence of men interfered with their pleasures. But Thierry thinks that the extreme severity of the Forest Laws was chiefly enforced to prevent the assemblage of Saxons in those vast wooded spaces which were now included in the royal demesnes. All these extensive tracts were, more or less, retreats for the dispossessed and the discontented. The Normans, under pretence of preserving the stag and the hare, could tyrannise with a pretended legality over the dwellers in these secluded places; and thus William might have driven the Saxon people of Ytene to emigrate, and have destroyed their cottages, as much from a possible fear of their association as from his own love of "the high deer." Whatever was the motive, there was devastation and misery. Domesday shows that in the district of the New Forest certain manors were afforested after the conquest; cultivated portions, in which the Sabbath-bell was heard. William of Jumièges, the Conqueror's own chaplain, says, speaking of the deaths of Richard and Rufus, "There were

Hunting Stag. (Royal MS. 2 B. vii.)

many who held that the two sons of William the king perished by the judgment of God in these woods, since for the *extension* of the forest, he had destroyed many inhabited *places* (*villas*) *and churches within its circuit.*" It appears that in the time of Edward the Confessor, about seventeen thousand acres of this district had been afforested; but that the cultivated parts remaining had then an estimated value of 363*l*. After the afforestation by the Conqueror, the cultivated parts yielded only 129*l*.†

The grants of land to huntsmen (*venatores*) are common in Hampshire, as in other parts of England; and it appears to have been the duty of an especial officer to stall the deer—that is, to drive them with his troop of

* Notes to Stewart Rose's Poem of "The Red King."
† Introduction to Domesday, folio, p. xxxiv.

followers from all parts to the centre of a circle, gradually contracting, where they were to stand for the onslaught of the hunters. In the Survey, many parks are enumerated. The word Hay (*haia*), which is still found in some of our counties, was an enclosed part of a wood to which the deer were driven. In the seventeenth century, this mode of hunting upon a large scale, by stalling the deer—this mimic war—was common in Scotland. Taylor, called "The Water Poet," was present at such a gathering; and has described the scene with a minuteness which may help us to form a picture of the Norman hunters:—"Five or six hundred men do rise early in the morning, and they do disperse themselves divers ways; and seven, eight, or ten miles' compass, they do bring or chase in the deer in many herds (two, three, or four hundred in a herd) to such a place as the noblemen shall appoint them; then, when the day is come, the lords and gentlemen of their companies do ride or go to the said places, sometimes wading up to the middle through bourns and rivers; and then they being come to the place, do lie down on the ground till those foresaid scouts, which are called the Tinkhelt, do bring down the deer. Then, after we had stayed there three hours or thereabouts, we might perceive the deer appear on the hills round about us (their heads making a show like a wood), which being followed close by the Tinkhelt, are chased down into the valley where we lay; then all the valley on each side being waylaid with a hundred couple of strong Irish greyhounds, they are let loose as occasion serves upon the herd of deer, that with dogs, guns, arrows, dirks, and daggers, in the space of two hours, fourscore fat deer were slain."

Domesday affords indubitable proof of the culture of the vine in England. There are thirty-eight entries of vineyards in the southern and eastern counties. Many gardens are enumerated. Mills are registered with great distinctness; for they were invariably the property of the lords of the manors, lay or ecclesiastical; and the tenants could only grind at the lord's mill. Wherever we find a mill specified in Domesday, there we generally find a mill now. At Arundel, for example, we see what rent was paid by a mill; and there still stands at Arundel an old mill whose foundations might have been laid before the Conquest. Salt-works are repeatedly mentioned. They were either works upon the coast for procuring marine salt by evaporation, or were established in the localities of inland salt-springs. The salt-works of Cheshire were the most numerous, and were called "wiches." Hence the names of some places, such as Middlewich and Nantwich. The revenue from

Mill at Arundel.

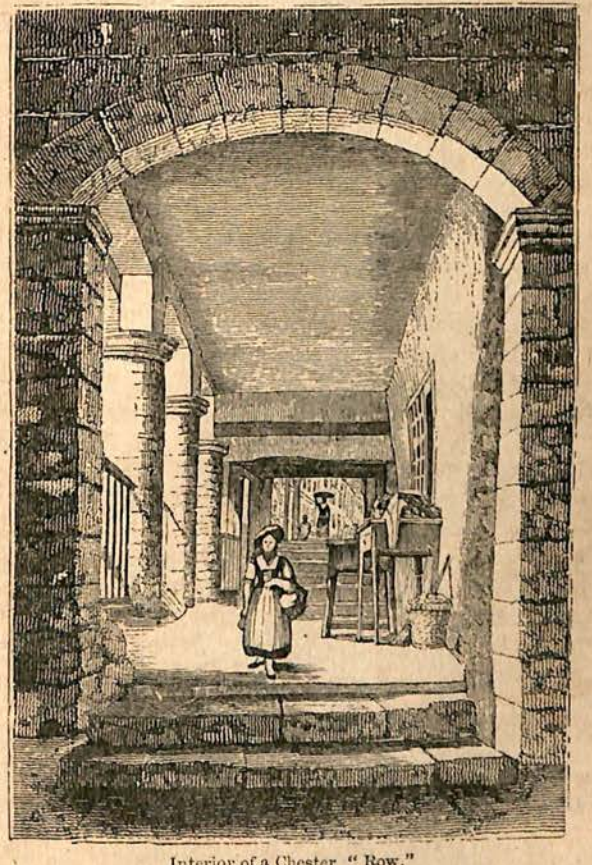
mines offers some curious facts. No mention of tin is to be found in Cornwall. The ravages of Saxon and Dane, and the constant state of hostility between races, had destroyed much of that mineral industry which existed in the Roman times. A century and a half after the Conquest had elapsed before the Norman kings had a revenue from the Cornish iron mines. Iron forges were registered; and lumps of hammered iron are stated to have been paid as rent. Lead-works are found only upon the king's demesne in Derbyshire.

Fisheries are important sources of rent. Payments of eels are enumerated by hundreds and thousands. Herrings appear to have been consumed in vast numbers in the monasteries. Sandwich yielded forty thousand annually to Christ Church in Canterbury. Kent, Sussex, and Norfolk appear to have been the great seats of this fishery. The Severn and the Wye had their salmon fisheries, whose produce king, bishop, and lord were glad to receive as rent. There was a weir for Thames fish at Mortlake. The religious houses had their *piscinæ* and *vivaria*—their stews and fish-pools.

Domesday affords us many curious glimpses of the condition of the people in cities and burghs. For the most part they seem to have preserved their ancient customs. London, Winchester, and several other important places are not mentioned in the record. We shall very briefly notice a few indications of the state of society. Dover was an important place, for it supplied the king with twenty ships for fifteen days in a year, each vessel having twenty-one men on board. Dover could therefore command the service of four hundred and twenty mariners. Every burgess in Lewes compounded for a payment of twenty shillings when the king fitted out a fleet to keep the sea. At Oxford the king could command the services of twenty burgesses whenever he went on an expedition; or they might compound for their services by a payment of twenty pounds. Oxford was a considerable place at this period. It contained upwards of seven hundred houses; but four hundred and seventy-eight were so desolated that they could pay no dues. Hereford was the king's demesne; and the honour of being his immediate tenants appears to have been qualified by considerable exactions. When he went to war, and when he went to hunt, men were to be ready for his service. If the wife of a burgher brewed his ale, he paid tenpence. The smith who kept a forge had to make nails from the king's iron. In Hereford, as in other cities, there were moneyers, or coiners. There were seven at Hereford, who were bound to coin as much of the king's silver into pence as he demanded. How the operations of this provincial mint were conducted may be seen from an ancient sculpture of a coiner at work. At Cambridge the burgesses were compelled to lend the sheriff their ploughs. Leicester was bound to find the king a hawk, or to pay ten pounds; whilst a sumpter or

From the capital of a pillar at St. Georges de Bocherville, Normandy.

baggage-horse, was compounded for at one pound. At Warwick there were two hundred and twenty-five houses on which the king and his barons claimed tax; and nineteen houses belonged to free burgesses. The dues were paid in honey and corn. In Shrewsbury there were two hundred and fifty-two houses belonging to burgesses; but the burgesses complained that they were called upon to pay as much tax as in the time of the Confessor, although Earl Roger had taken possession of extensive lands for building his castle. Chester was a port in which the king had his dues upon every cargo; and where he had fines whenever a trader was detected in using a false measure. The fraudulent female brewer of adulterated beer was placed in the cucking-stool, a degradation afterwards reserved for scolds. This city has a more particular notice as to laws and customs in the time of the



Interior of a Chester "Row."

Confessor than any other place in the Survey. Particular care seems to have been taken against fire. The owner of a house on fire not only paid a fine to the king, but forfeited two shillings to his nearest neighbour. Marten skins appear to have been a great article of trade in this city. No stranger could cart goods within a particular part of the city without being subjected to a forfeiture of four shillings, or two oxen, to the bishop. We find, as might be

expected, no mention of that peculiar architecture of Chester called the "Rows," which has so puzzled antiquarian writers. The probability is, that in a place so exposed to the attacks of the Welsh they were intended for defence. The low streets in which the Rows are situated have the road considerably beneath them, like the cutting of a railway; and from the covered-way of the Rows an enemy in the road beneath might be assailed with great advantage. In the civil wars of Charles I. the possession of the Rows by the Royalists, or Parliamentary troops, was fiercely contested. Of their antiquity there is no doubt. They probably belong to the same period as the Castle. The wall of Chester and the bridge were kept in repair, according to the Survey, by the service of one labourer for every hide of land in the county. It is to be remarked, that in all the cities and burghs the inhabitants are described as belonging to the king, or a bishop, or a baron. Many, even in the most privileged places, were attached to particular manors.

The Domesday Survey shows, that in some towns there was an admixture of Norman and English burgesses; and it is clear that they were so settled after the Conquest, for a distinction is made between the old customary dues of the place, and those the foreigner should pay. The foreigner had to bear a small addition to the ancient charge. No doubt the Norman clung to many of the habits of his own land; and the Saxon unwillingly parted with those of the locality in which his fathers had lived. But their manners were gradually assimilated. The Normans grew fond of the English beer, and the English adopted the Norman dress.

The Survey of 1085 affords the most complete evidence of the extent to which the Normans had possessed themselves of the landed property of the country. The ancient demesnes of the Crown consisted of fourteen hundred and twenty-two manors. But the king had confiscated the properties of Godwin, Harold, Algar, Edwin, Morcar, and other great Saxon earls; and his revenues thus became enormous. Ordericus Vitalis states, with a minuteness that seems to imply the possession of official information, that "the king himself received daily one and sixty pounds thirty thousand pence and three farthings sterling money, from his regular revenues in England alone, independently of presents, fines for offences, and many other matters which constantly enrich a royal treasury." The numbers of manors held by the favourites of the Conqueror would appear incredible, if we did not know that these great nobles were grasping and unscrupulous; indulging the grossest sensuality with a pretence of refinement; limited in their perpetration of injustice only by the extent of their power; and so blinded by their pride as to call their plunder their inheritance. Ten Norman chiefs

Norman House. (Bayeux Tapestry.)

who held under the Crown are enumerated in the Survey, as possessing two thousand eight hundred and twenty manors.*

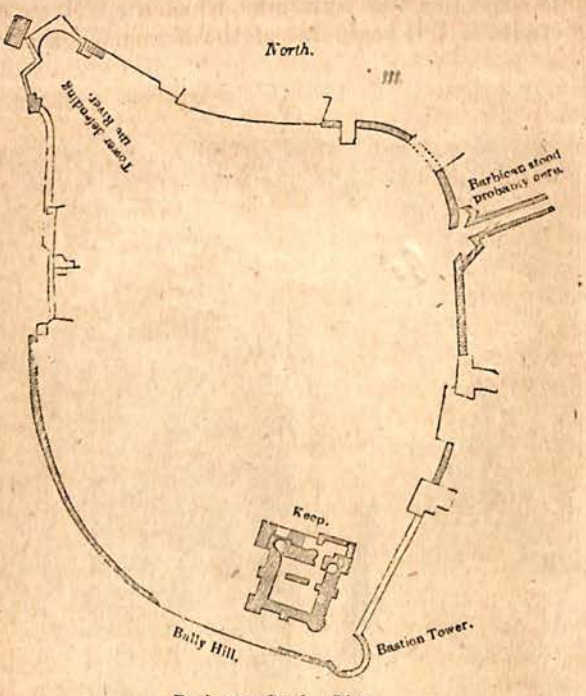
That this enormous transfer of property did not take place without the most formidable resistance, has been already shown. But when a period of tranquillity arrived came the era of castle-building. The Saxons had their rude fortresses, and entrenched earth-works. But solid walls of stone, for defence and residence, were to become the local seats of regal and baronial

Entrance of Rochester Castle.

domination. Domesday contains notices of forty-nine castles; but only one is mentioned as having existed in the time of Edward the Confessor. Some which the Conqueror is known to have built are not noticed in the Survey. Amongst these is the White Tower of London. The site of Rochester Castle is mentioned. These two buildings are associated by our old antiquaries as being erected by the same architect. Stow says, "I find in a fair register-book of the acts of the bishops of Rochester, set down by Edmund of Hadenham, that William I., surnamed Conqueror, builded the Tower of London, to wit, the great white and square tower there, about the year of Christ 1078, appointing Gundulph, then Bishop of Rochester, to be

* See the detailed number in Introduction to Domesday, p. lxxii.

principal surveyor and overseer of that work, who was for that time lodged in the house of Edmere, a burghess of London." The chapel in the White Tower is a remarkable specimen of early Norman architecture. The Keep of



Rochester Castle: Plan.

Rochester Castle, so picturesquely situated on the Medway, was not a mere fortress without domestic convenience. Here we still look upon the remains of sculptured columns and arches. We see where there were spacious fire-places in the walls, and how each of four floors was served with water by a well. The third story contains the most ornamental portions of the building. In the Domesday enumeration of castles, we have repeated mention of houses destroyed, and lands wasted, for their erection. At Cambridge, twenty-seven houses are recorded to have been thus demolished. This was the fortress to overawe the fen districts. At Lincoln a hundred and sixty-six mansions were destroyed, "on account of the castle." In the ruins of all these castles, we may trace their general plan. There was an outer court, an inner court, and a keep. Round the whole area was a wall, with parapets and loop-holes. The entrance was defended by an outwork, or barbican. The prodigious strength of the keep is the most remarkable characteristic of these fortresses; and thus many of these towers remain, stript of every interior fitting by time, but as untouched in their solid construction as the mounts upon which they stand. We ascend the steep steps which lead to the ruined keep of Carisbrook, with all our historical associations directed to the confinement of Charles I. in this castle. But this fortress was registered in Domesday Book. Five centuries and a half had elapsed between William 1. and James I. The Norman keep was out of

harmony with the principles of the seventeenth century, as much as the feudal prerogatives to which Charles unhappily clung.

We have thus enumerated, as briefly as possible, some of the more prominent statistics of this ancient Survey, which are truly as much matter of history as the events of this beginning of the Norman period. There is one

The Keep, Carisbrook Castle.

more feature of this Domesday-book, which we cannot pass over. The number of parish churches in England in the eleventh century will, in some degree, furnish an indication of the amount of religious instruction. By some most extraordinary exaggeration, the number of these churches has been stated to be above forty-five thousand. In Domesday, the number enumerated is a little above seventeen hundred. No doubt this enumeration is extremely imperfect. Very nearly half of all the churches put down are found in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. The Register, in some cases, gives the amount of land with which the Church was endowed. Bosham, in

Sussex, the estate of Harold, had, in the time of King Edward, a hundred and twelve hides of land. At the date of the Survey it had sixty-five hides. This was an enormous endowment. Some churches had five acres only; some fifty; some a hundred. Some are without land altogether. But, whether the endowment be large or small, here is the evidence of a Church planted upon the same foundation as the Monarchy, that of territorial possessions.

The politic ruler of England had, in the completion of Domesday Book, possessed himself of the most perfect instrument for the profitable administration of his government. He was no longer working in the dark, whether he called out soldiers or levied taxes. He had carried through a great measure, rapidly, and with a minuteness which puts to shame some of our clumsy modern statistics. We were guessing at the number of our population until the beginning of this century. We are still guessing how much corn is grown upon our lands, what is pasture, what is wood, and how many sheep and oxen are maintained. In the Chapter-House at Westminster, the two vellum books of eight centuries ago presented to the administrators for whom they were prepared a more complete view of the material condition of the country than we have at this hour. But the Conqueror did not want his vellum books for the gratification of official curiosity. He went to work when he knew how many tenants-in-chief he could command, and how many men they could bring into the field. He instituted the great feudal principle of Knight-Service. His ordinance is in these words:—"We command that all earls, barons, knights, sergeants, and freemen be always provided with horses and arms as they ought, and that they be always ready to perform to us their whole service, in manner as they owe it to us of right for their fees and tenements, and as we have appointed to them by the common council of our whole kingdom, and as we have granted to them in fee with right of inheritance." These words, "in fee, with right of inheritance," leave no doubt that the great vassals of the crown were absolute proprietors, and that all their sub-vassals had the same right of holding in perpetuity. The estate, however, reverted to the crown, if the race of the original feoffee became extinct, and in cases, also, of felony and treason. When Alain of Bretagne, who commanded the rear of the army at the battle of Hastings, and who had received four hundred and forty-two manors, bowed before the king at Salisbury, at the great council in 1085, and swore to be true to him against all manner of men, he also brought with him his principal *land-sittende* men (land-owners), who also bowed before the king, and became his men. They had previously taken the oath of fealty to Alain of Bretagne, and engaged to perform all the customs and services due to him for their lands and tenements. Alain, and his men, were proprietors, but with very unequal rights. Alain, by his tenure, was bound to provide for the king as many armed horsemen as the vast extent of his estates demanded. But all those whom he had enfeoffed, or made proprietors, upon his four hundred and forty-two manors, were each bound to contribute a proportionate number. When the free service of forty days was to be enforced, the great earl had only to send round to his vassals, and the men were at his command. By this organisation, which was universal throughout the kingdom, sixty thousand cavalry could, with little delay, be called into the field. Those who held by this military service had their

allotments divided into so many knight's fees, and each knight's fee was to furnish one mounted and armed soldier. The great vassals retained a portion of their land as their demesnes, having tenants who paid rents and performed services not military. But, under any circumstances, the vassal of the crown was bound to perform his whole free service with men and horses and arms. It is perfectly clear that this wonderful organisation rendered the whole

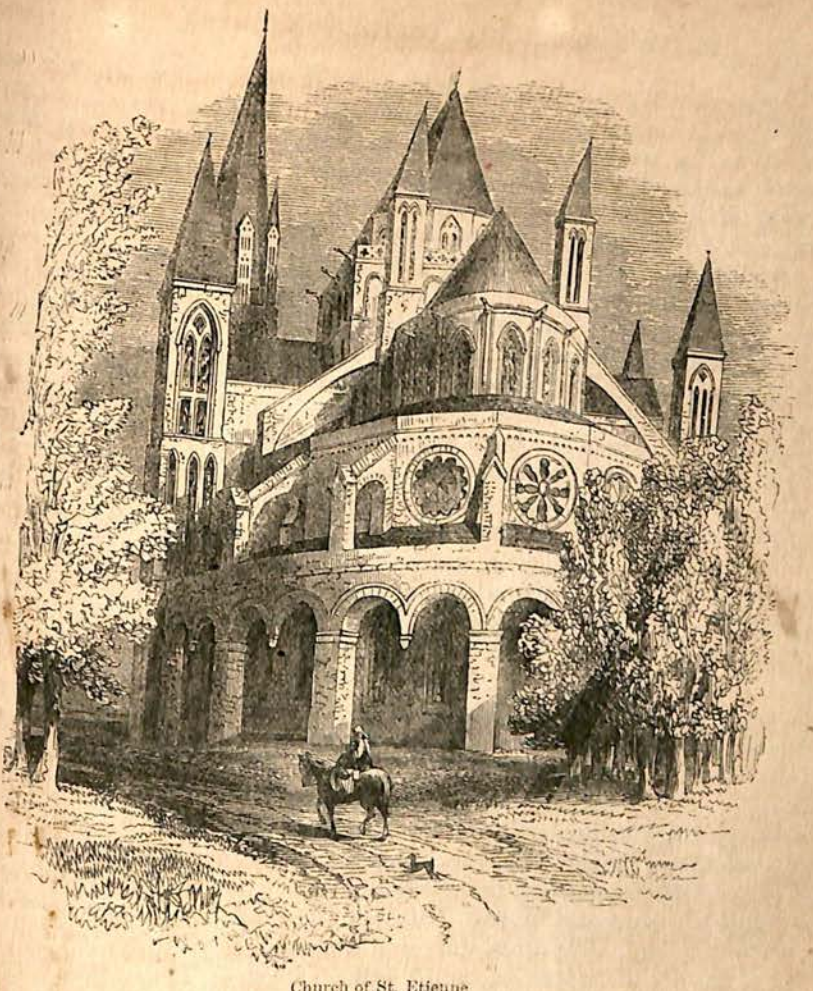
The Norman Knight. (From the Horse Armoury in the Tower of London.)

system of government one great confederacy, in which the small proprietors, tenants, and villeins, had not a chance of independence; and that their condition could only be ameliorated by those gradual changes which result from a long intercourse between the strong and the weak, in which power relaxes its severity and becomes protection.

In the ordinance in which the king commanded "free service," he also says, "we will that all the freemen of the kingdom possess their lands in

peace, free from all tallage and unjust exaction." This, unhappily for the freemen, was little more than a theory under the Norman kings. There were various modes of making legal exaction the source of the grossest injustice. When the heir of an estate entered into possession, he had to pay "a relief," or "heriot," to the lord. This soon became a source of oppression in the crown; and enormous sums were exacted from the great vassals. The lord was not more sparing of his men. He had another mode of extortion. He demanded "aid" on many occasions, such as the marriage of his eldest daughter, or when he made his eldest son a knight. The estate of inheritance, which looks so generous and equitable an arrangement, was a perpetual grievance; for the possessor could neither transmit his property by will, nor transfer it by sale. The heir, however remote in blood, was the only legitimate successor. The feudal obligation to the lord was, in many other ways, a fruitful source of tyranny, which lasted up to the time of the Stuarts. If the heir were a minor, the lord entered into temporary possession of the estate, without any accountability. If it descended to a female, the lord could compel her to marry according to his will, or could prevent her marrying. During a long period all these harassing obligations connected with property were upheld. The crown and the nobles were equally interested in their enforcement; and there can be little doubt that, though the great vassals sometimes suffered under these feudal obligations to the king, the inferior tenants had a much greater amount of oppression to endure at the hands of their immediate lords. But if the freemen were oppressed in the tenure of their property, we can scarcely expect that the landless man had not much more to suffer. If he committed an offence in the Saxon time, he paid a "mulct;" if in the Norman, he was subjected to an "*amerciament*." His whole personal estate was at the mercy of the lord.

Having thus obtained a general, however imperfect, notion of the system of society established in less than twenty years after the Conquest, we see that there was nothing wanting to complete the most entire subjection of the great body of the nation. What had been wanting was accomplished in the practical working out of the theory, that the entire land of the country belonged to the king. It was now established that every tenant in chief should do homage to the king; that every superior tenant should do homage to his lord; that every villein should be the bondman of the free; and that every slave should, without any property however limited and insecure, be the absolute chattel of some master. The whole system was connected with military service. This was the feudal system. There was some resemblance to it in parts of the Saxon organisation; but under that organisation there was so much of freedom in the allodial or free tenure of land, that a great deal of other freedom went with it. The casting-off of the chains of feudality was the labour of six centuries.



Church of St. Etienne.

CHAPTER XVI.

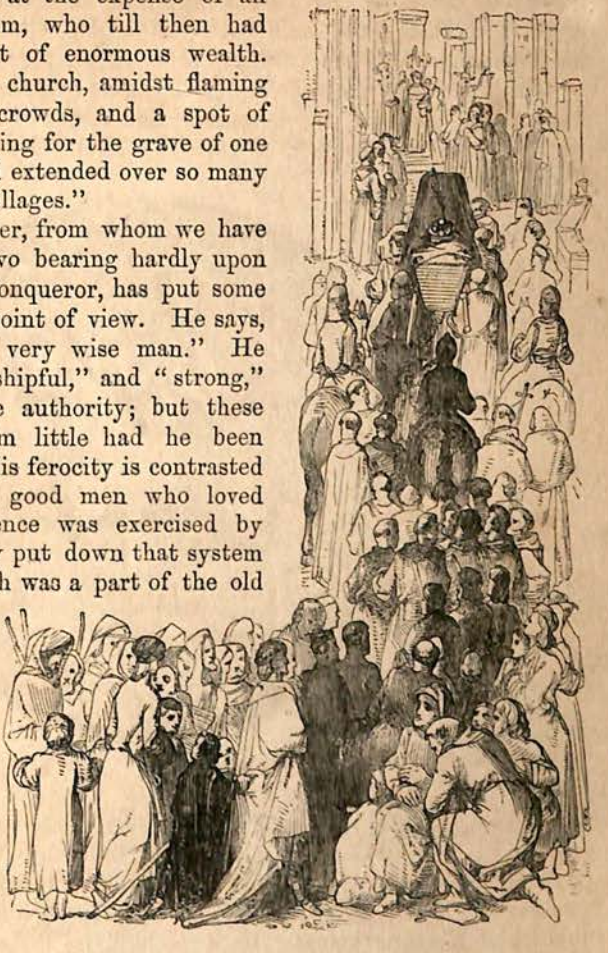
Burning of Mantes—Death-bed of the Conqueror—His funeral—Traits of his character—Coronation of William II.—Insurrection of Norman nobles in England—Ralph Flambard—Profligacy of the court of Rufus—Robert's government in Normandy—Quarrels of William and Robert—Troubles in England—Rapacity of the king—Effects upon the country—Robert pawns Normandy—The first Crusade preached by Pope Urban II.—Progress of the Crusaders—Jerusalem taken—William's Norman wars—His death in the New Forest.

KING WILLIAM was holding his court at Westminster in 1086. His youngest son, Henry, who is eighteen years of age, had been knighted by his father. He was the *Beau Clerc*—the lettered prince—of the family; brought up under the tuition of the learned and sagacious Archbishop Lanfranc. In the January of 1087, William returned to Normandy. He had a long-standing dispute to settle with Philip I. of France, about his claim to the territory of the Vexin, which had been dismembered from Normandy and annexed to France. The French king despised the demand of the Norman duke, and made a coarse joke about his corpulency. William, old and heavy,

had still that alacrity of mind, and that unconquerable will which won and kept England. He left his bed at Rouen, and in August was on his war-horse before the town of Mantes. As his army had marched along those pleasant banks of the Seine, on whose winding course the steam-borne traveller of the nineteenth century gazes with delight, the ripe corn was burnt, and the laden vines trodden down. The fierce soldiers took the town by assault; and fire and slaughter waited upon the ferocious duke as his accustomed ministers. The race, of which he was the greatest, cared very little for human life; but they were equally prodigal of their own lives. William, under the hot autumn sun, rode amongst the smouldering ruins of the burning town. His horse fell, with his bulky rider, who received a severe injury, and was carried back to Rouen. The hour was approaching, when the great ones of the earth feel that their glory is a very unsubstantial thing; and when some human emotions mingle with the pride and cruelty which have separated them from mankind. The death-bed of William, according to the Chroniclers, was a death-bed of repentance. He had always made a profession of religion, and he was now surrounded by bishops and confessors. He spoke, it is related, of the rivers of blood he had shed. He lamented his barbarities in England. We are somewhat sceptical about the authenticity of his dying oration. His two sons, William and Henry, were around their father. Robert, the elder, was at the court of France. He, whom his fathers and brothers used to ridicule for his short legs—the Gambaron or Curt-hose—had a nobler nature than the brutal Rufus, or the crafty Beau Clerc. But the king hated him. Still, he could not deny him his right to the inheritance of Normandy. To William he recommended an instant journey to England to secure possession of the crown. To Henry, who was then only eighteen years of age, he bequeathed five thousand pounds of silver. He commanded the release of some whom he held in captivity—amongst whom was earl Morcar. His forgiveness of Odo was most reluctantly wrung from him. The great duke and king suddenly expired, on the morning of the 9th of September, as the cathedral bell of Rouen was tolling the hour of prime. The moment he was gone, his attendants laid hands on robes and linen, plate and armour; and the Conqueror was left, to point the same moral of the vanity of grandeur, and the heartlessness of flatterers and favourites, that has been drawn from kingly death-beds, even up to our own times. The grave of William was as remarkable for an extraordinary occurrence as the deserted chamber of death. He had founded the church of St. Etienne at Caen. It was consecrated in 1077, amidst the most gorgeous ceremonies. The west front of the original building, with two high and solid towers, still remains. Here was brought the body of the king, by barge from Rouen. Being about to be lowered into the earth—in the presence of a few, for a fire had broken out in the town—Ascelin, the son of Arthur, cried out, that the land upon which they stood was the yard belonging to his father's house, and that the Duke of Normandy had seized it, by an exercise of tyranny. "I therefore," said the bold man, "openly demand its restitution, and in God's name I forbid the body of the spoiler being covered with earth which is my inheritance." Ordericus thus sums up the closing scene of the life of the Conqueror:—"A king, once potent, and warlike, and the terror of numberless inhabitants of many provinces, lay naked on the floor, deserted

William II.

by those who owed him their birth, and those he had fed and enriched. He needed the money of a stranger for the cost of his funeral, and a coffin and bearers were provided, at the expense of an ordinary person, for him, who till then had been in the enjoyment of enormous wealth. He was carried to the church, amidst flaming houses, by trembling crowds, and a spot of freehold land was wanting for the grave of one whose princely sway had extended over so many cities, and towns, and villages."



The Saxon Chronicler, from whom we have quoted a passage or two bearing hardly upon the character of the Conqueror, has put some of his merits in a fair point of view. He says, "King William was a very wise man." He was "rich," and "worshipful," and "strong," according to the same authority; but these would have availed him little had he been wanting in sagacity. His ferocity is contrasted with "his mildness to good men who loved God." Whatever violence was exercised by the powerful, he forcibly put down that system of private violence which was a part of the old Germanic habits and traditions: "No man durst slay another man, though he had suffered never so mickle evil from the other." In Alfred's time, the right of private vengeance, in certain cases, was legally recognised. However the Norman chiefs plundered the Saxon, in the guise of feudal rights, the vulgar plunderer was mercilessly punished, "So that a man, that was good for aught, might travel over the kingdom with his bosom full of gold, without molestation." His pride, his avarice, his severity, are prominent characteristics of this man; but we must look at him in connection with the times in which he lived, and the circumstances he had to controul; and admire the pious chronicler who sums up his merits and demerits, by praying that God would "grant him of his sins forgiveness."

The "Red King" was crowned at Westminster on the 26th September, 1087. He was on his road to England while his father was dying. But there were difficulties in his elevation to the throne, which would probably not have been easily overcome had not Archbishop Lanfranc moved the whole power of the church in his behalf. The principle of elevation to the sovereignty was not relaxed. As the elder brother, Robert, would have had a clearer

title, the doubts that hung over the accession of the younger were very considerable. But, beyond this, the severance of the crowns of England and Normandy could not have been agreeable to many of the Norman barons. If the severance could have been maintained, the destinies of the island-kingdom might have been changed at an earlier period.

The first proceedings of William II. gave evidence of his character. The death-bed clemency of the Conqueror had bestowed freedom on Morcar, and on Wulfnoth, the brother of Harold. They followed Rufus to England;

Great Seal of William II. (Reverse.)

and he rewarded their confidence by immediate imprisonment. He had greater dangers to apprehend from the Norman chiefs. Some of the more powerful were strongly against a divided sovereignty. They had large possessions in both countries. If they clung to William, Robert would seize upon their Norman estates. If they clung to Robert, William would seize upon their English estates. Robert was of an easy temper; William was arrogant. Odo and others therefore tendered their allegiance to Duke Robert. An insurrection very soon broke out in different quarters. It is worthy of special remark that the English, almost universally, supported the young king. We may attribute this not only to the oppressions they had endured from the Norman chieftains, but to a far-seeing policy, chiefly derived from the churchmen. The bold and haughty Rufus, as a sole king of England, was to be upheld, in preference to the indolent and pliant Robert, as joint sovereign of England and Normandy. It was a part of the old Saxon nationality, subdued, but not extinct. William raised a large army, and besieged Odo, who was the most formidable of the conspirators, in Rochester Castle, after a previous encounter at Pevensey. There were five hundred Normans shut up in the strong-hold of the Medway, with the Bishop of Bayeux, and Eustace of Boulogne, and other powerful leaders. It

was the height of summer, and the heat, and the vitiated atmosphere of the castle, produced disease, and a plague like one of those of Egypt—the plague of "innumerable flies." At length the garrison was allowed to capitulate; and the Norman revolters marched out, amidst the English cry of "A gallows for the bishop." Odo never returned; and his enormous possessions were confiscated. The other disaffected nobles and bishops were subdued or propitiated.

In 1089, Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, died. To his firmness and moderation William II. was mainly indebted for his throne; and, during the short time in which Lanfranc was his adviser, the more prominent evils of the king's character were kept in subjection. William appointed no successor to the archbishop, but held the revenues of the see in his own hands. He soon found a more congenial minister than Lanfranc. There was in his court, a Norman clerk, of the name of Ralph, of handsome person and fluent speech, sensual and ambitious. So the old writers describe him; and they tell us that the king's steward—*dispensator*, (from whose title came the family name of Despenser,) gave Ralph the soubriquet of Flambard; "for, like a devouring flame, he tormented the people, and turned the daily chants of the church into lamentations."* He was a subtle financier. He managed to swell the king's revenues by a stricter admeasurement of the lands of the kingdom than that of Domesday-Book. He was perhaps not altogether wrong in this strictness; for we learn from Ingulphus that the commissioners who prepared the first Survey "showed a kind and benevolent feeling towards our monastery, and did not value the monastery at its true revenue, nor yet at its exact extent, and thus, in their compassion, took due precautions against the future exactions of the kings." The simple Abbot of Croyland did not calculate upon the presence of "the destructive torch," to throw a light upon these little secrets of official management. In other state matters, Flambard and his master seized church properties, and made exactions upon the laity, with no pretence of justice. Malmesbury has given a strong picture of these times. There was no man rich except the money-changer; no clerk, unless he was a lawyer. The halter was loosened from the robber's neck, if he could promise any gain to the king. The courtiers consumed the substance of the country people. The state of manners at the court of Rufus is described as the most disgusting mixture of folly and licentiousness.

Silver Penny of William II.

The extravagant fashions of dress are amusingly detailed by Ordericus. The shoes were long-peaked, turned up like a ram's horn, instead of the "shoes with round toes, fitted to the foot, which were in common use by rich and poor, clergy and laity." These most inconvenient marks of gentility kept their place for three centuries. The courtiers of Rufus, too, wore long robes and mantles; muffled their hands with gloves that prevented their doing anything useful; and their flowing locks were curled with hot irons. These extravagances are denounced with an honest vehemence by the monk of St. Evroult, and he contrasts these absurd and costly fashions with the

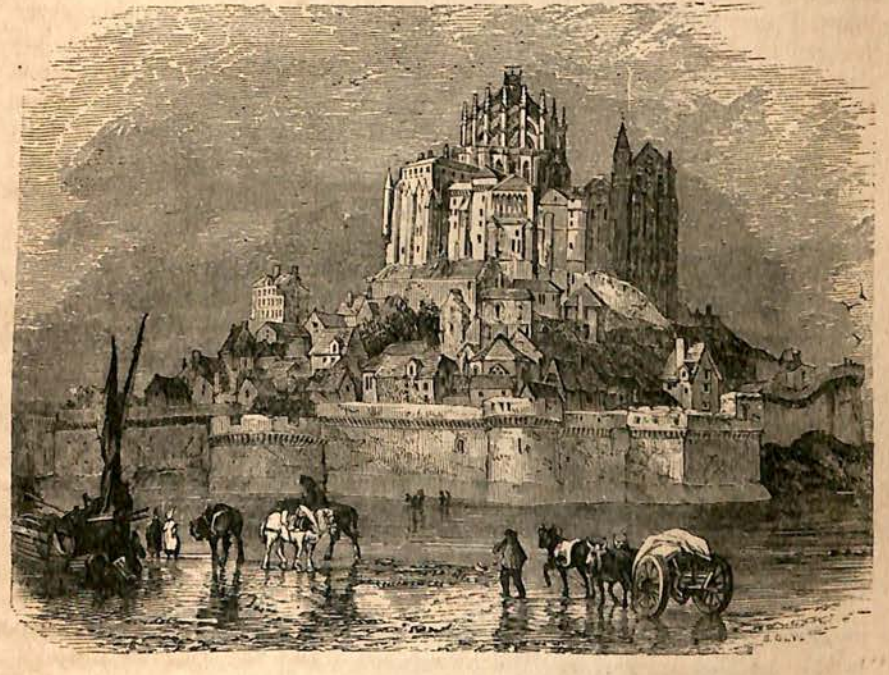
* Ordericus Vitalis, book viii. c. 8.

proprieties of "a modest dress, well fitted to the proportions of the body, and convenient for riding and walking, and for all active employments, as common sense dictated." The "wealthy curled darlings" passed their time in banqueting and drunkenness, in idle talk and gambling. It might be a question if the silly and enervated parasites of Rufus were not more endurable than the crafty and tyrannous warriors of the Conqueror, did we not know that the caterpillars that devour the leaves and blossoms of the vineyard are more destructive than the boar that roots up the vine.

Robert, duke of Normandy, was doing wrong to his commonwealth, after a different mode from William, king of England. Robert was destroying the resources of the state by improvident liberality. He had sold a third part of his duchy, the province of Cotentin, to his brother Henry, under some financial pressure; whilst his kind brother of England was using every intrigue to dispossess him of all that was left of his dominions, and had already obtained possession of fortresses on the right bank of the Seine. In 1090, the city of Rouen was incited to insurrection, chiefly by the bribes and promises of William. Henry came to the aid of Robert, although they had previously quarrelled; and through his determined boldness the revolt was quelled. The townsmen were divided. Some fought for the king, and some for the duke. The revolters against the ducal government were led by Conan, a rich burgess of Rouen. The revolt was put down, and he was taken prisoner, and led to the castle. Then Prince Henry took him to the summit of a tower, and bade him look upon the beautiful prospect beneath them—the wooded glades of the park on the south bank of the river—the vessels laden with merchandise—the populous city, with its high walls, and rich churches, and stately houses. "These are the things of which you desired to be master," said the prince to the citizen. "Take all my wealth for ransom," cried the trembling prisoner. "By the soul of my mother I will take no ransom;" and with these words the strong youth seized the wretched man, and threw him headlong from the lofty window. Ordericus tells this story and adds, "The place where the deed of vengeance was wrought is called to this day 'Conan's Leap.'"

Robert, the duke, had many affairs on his hands at this period. When he was roused by war he appears to have been foremost in battle and siege. In 1090, he is besieging Brionne, and setting fire to the castle by arrows whose steel points were made red-hot in a furnace. In 1091, he is before Courci, where the garrison made a resolute defence. Red-hot arrows are weapons of war not very common in the middle ages; but at the siege of Courci, the Norman duke employed a mode of offence which became common enough before the practice of warfare had been wholly changed by the invention of gunpowder. "He caused a vast machine, called a belfry (*berfredum*), to be erected over against the castle-walls, and filled it with all kinds of warlike

instruments." * These sieges and slaughterings arose out of the unhappy condition of the ducal dominions, which the historians attribute to the pride and ambition of the Norman nobles, bloated with the ill-gotten wealth of England. Robert, however, was freed awhile from the rapacity of Rufus. The king passed many months in Normandy, during the year 1091; and the brothers came to terms of agreement for their future government. Edgar, the Atheling, is still upon the stage; and he is now deprived of his estates in Normandy, and compelled to seek an asylum in Scotland. The king and the duke have now grown jealous of Henry, who has put his five thousand crowns to such good interest that he has become formidable. Amongst several strong castles, he has secured Mount St. Michael, although obliged to abandon other



fortresses. Here, on this lofty rock, which stands, twice in the day amidst a plain of sand, and twice encompassed with tidal waters, Henry bade defiance to the assaults of armies. But the waters which surrounded the castle were useless to allay the cravings of his famished garrison, and he was finally obliged to capitulate. There are two occurrences during this siege which are told by Malmesbury as characteristic of the king and the duke. William was unhorsed by a soldier, who was about to kill him, when he cried out, "Hold, rascal, I am the King of England." The king was spared, and the soldier rewarded. Robert, having learnt that Henry was suffering in the beleaguered castle, with his men, contrived that they should obtain some water, at which the less tender William was enraged. "Oh, shame," said Robert, "should I permit my brother to die of thirst? and where shall we find another if we lose him?"

* Ordericus Vitalis, book viii. c. 16.

In 1092 the king returned to England, accompanied by the duke of Normandy. During his absence, Malcolm, the king of Scotland, had invaded the northern counties; and William hastened to drive him back. The armies met in Lothian; but a peace was concluded. On the return to the south, the English king seized Carlisle, which had been considered an appanage of

Carlisle Castle.

the crown of Scotland. Here he founded a colony, and built the present castle. Another quarrel was the consequence; and Malcolm, after having met the English king at Gloucester, and resisted his claims, invaded Northumberland. Here the unfortunate king of Scotland, and his son Edward, were killed in a sudden surprise—some say by treachery. The good Queen Margaret survived her husband and son only four days.

Duke Robert had come to England to obtain indemnity for possessions which he had surrendered in Normandy. He obtained nothing. According to the custom of chivalry, Robert sent to England two heralds to denounce his faithless brother as a perjured knight. William, like many other guilty men, would bear no imputation upon his honour, and went to Normandy to submit the points in dispute to arbitration. Twenty-four Norman barons decided against him. He then resolved upon war; and collected a large army at Hastings. The chroniclers say that the unscrupulous financier, Ralph Flambard, made this a new pretence of extortion. The war with Robert was not undertaken; and the soldiers were dismissed to their homes,

upon making a handsome contribution to the wants of the king. He had more bribery to accomplish in Normandy. But he suddenly returned home, to put down an outbreak of the Welsh; to which succeeded an insurrection of the nobles in the north. Rufus was as energetic and as merciless as his father; and the dangers were averted.

But there was a new arrangement between the rival brothers which was eventually to unite England and Normandy again under one king. Robert, in 1096, pawned his dukedom to William for five years. The mortgage-money of ten thousand pounds was, of course, to be paid by the people of the island. William and Robert are once more bound in hollow friendship, bought by "an edict for an intolerable tax throughout England." *

The quarrels and the reconciliations of these turbulent princes would have little interest for us in these days, if we did not regard them from a higher point of view than that of their personal relations. Whatever these individuals do or suffer, the great body of the people is in some degree affected by their movements. In 1091, William, as we have seen, went to Normandy to cajole Robert, and to bribe Robert's supporters. He had a large revenue, but he required more money, and he levied a severe tax throughout the kingdom. Was it a tax which the rich and the powerful alone paid out of their abundance? Malmesbury writes thus, of the year 1092: "On account of the heavy tribute which the king, while in Normandy, had levied, agriculture failed; of which failure the immediate consequence was a famine. This also gaining ground, a mortality ensued, so general, that the dying wanted attendance, and the dead, burial." Agriculture failed, because the king had appropriated the capital which was stored up for the maintenance of agriculture. The lands were untilled one year, and famine inevitably followed. The poverty produced by exorbitant taxation, and by abstracting all the surplus wealth of the country, without a chance of its returning through the channels of commerce, kept the towns as poor as the fields were barren. In 1091, London was so meanly and unsubstantially built, that six hundred houses were blown down by a violent whirlwind. In 1092, the greater part of London was destroyed by fire. Hoveden, who records these calamities, gives us no description of the houses that were blown down or burnt. No doubt they were wretched wooden hovels, such as were common enough in England and every other European country, till the peaceable and industrious many had become too numerous and too strong any longer to bear the oppressions of the arrogant and luxurious few. It was a long and difficult process to work this change; but we shall find how, amidst all the misery and isolation of the feudal state, the great principles of modern society were gradually evolved, and a free and flourishing nation arose out of the chaotic relations of tyrant and bondman.

The mortgage of Normandy to William was connected with one of the most wonderful stirrings of the human heart that has been recorded in the history of mankind. The money of which William stripped his people, to pay the stipulated price to Robert for the surrender of his dominions—to raise which he even compelled the churchmen to bring to him their golden shrines and silver chalices—this price was nothing compared with the property that was devoted by the people of Europe for the recovery of Jerusalem from the

* Malmesbury, book iv. c. 1

infidels. "Whatever was stored in granaries, or hoarded in chambers," says Malmesbury, "all was deserted." Robert of Normandy was one of the leaders of the first Crusade. "It was one of those events," writes Guizot, "which change the condition of the people."

It is recorded that, on the night of the 4th of April, 1095, Gilbert, Bishop of Lisieux, in Normandy, who had been chaplain and physician to William the Conqueror, observing that remarkable phenomenon of innumerable falling stars which is now familiar to us at particular seasons, interpreted the appearance as a portent of an immense emigration of people from one country to another, from which they would never return till the stars came back to their place in the heavens.* In November of the same year, Pope Urban II. attended the great council of Clermont, in Auvergne; and from a lofty scaffold in the market-place of Clermont preached the Crusade to assembled thousands. A vast multitude had arrived from all the surrounding districts—princes, bishops, nobles, knights, priests, burgesses, and rustics. For a zealous missionary had gone through Italy and France, and had proclaimed in every land that the Holy Sepulchre, which Christian pilgrims had freely visited from the days of Haroun Alraschid, was now closed against them by the Turk who had conquered Syria; and that the servants of the Cross were massacred, plundered, sold into slavery. This was Peter of Amiens, known as Peter the Hermit.† It was in the power of this man, mean of person, but gifted with that eloquence which is more potent than any physical superiority, to rouse a spirit in prince and people which had the character of universality. Before this time there was no common bond amongst the Christian communities of Europe — no prevailing sentiment which could unite the governments, and still less the people, in any general course of action. The extension of the Mohammedan empire was dreaded; but no state was strong enough to encounter the danger single-handed; and no confederacy of states could be constructed amidst the jealousies and hatreds of their ambitious rulers. Not only was any political unity impossible amongst many nations, but a common political sentiment was equally impossible amongst the classes of any one nation. But a vast European confederation for obtaining the freedom of Christian worship in the land which the Redeemer and his apostles had trodden, was an idea that seized upon the minds of men in all countries and of all classes, with a force which

* Ordericus Vitalis, book ix. c. 2.

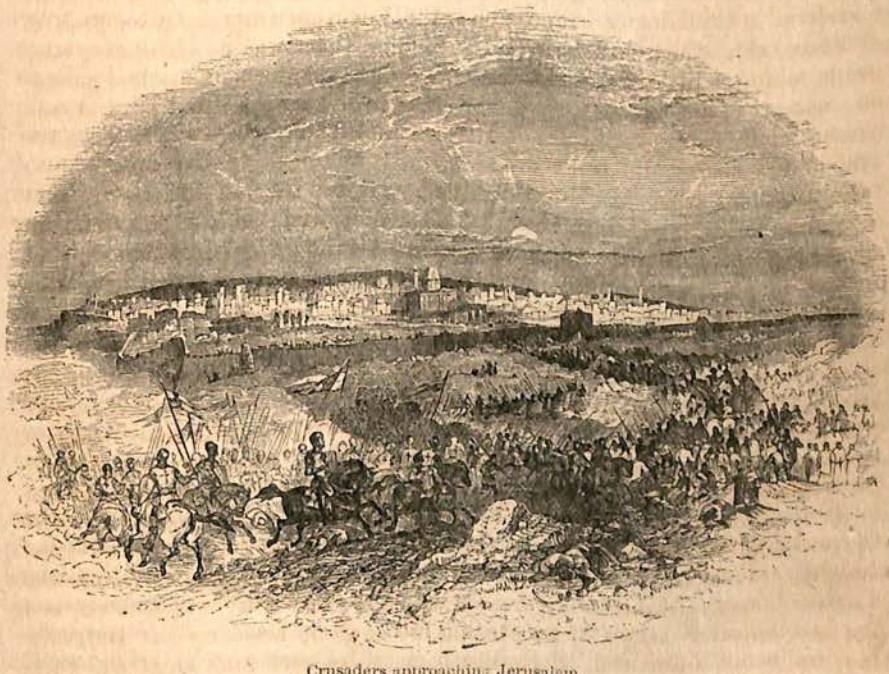
† This common title was derived from his family name of L'Ermite.

those only cannot comprehend who measure the character of a past age by the principles and feelings of their own age. When Pope Urban, from his lofty platform in the market-place of Clermont, called out to the chieftains and warriors, "Go, and employ, in nobler warfare, that valour and that sagacity which you have been used to waste in civil broils," he addressed himself to that love of excitement which, as much as the love of plunder, had called forth the lord from the monotony of his solitary castle, gladly to encounter the perils of "civil broils," rather than to dream away his life in wearisome idleness. None of the resources of modern society could give a relish to the existence of the feudal chief. The chase and the carousal, day by day, and year by year—the same priest at the mass; the same wife at the distaff; the same jester at the banquet—no books, no intelligent converse, no regular communication with the surrounding world, no care for the education of children, no solicitude for the welfare of dependants—a dark tower for a dwelling, with neighbours whom he despised and persecuted—this was an existence for the lord of many manors that those who command the humblest of the manifold conveniences and pleasures of modern times need not envy. The prospect of visiting far-off and famous lands; of fighting against heathen miscreants; of returning with wealth and glory; or of dying in the assured hope of felicity; made the Crusade as welcome to the feudal lord as the gayest tournament. Nor was it less welcome to those whom Urban addressed, not as leaders in the enterprise, but as humble followers: "Let no love of relations detain you; for man's chiefest love is towards God. Let no attachment to your native soil be an impediment; because, in different points of view, all the world is exile to the Christian, and all the world his country." Attachment to his native soil would scarcely be an impediment to the lord's humble vassal; for the produce of the soil was scanty, and what he reaped he could rarely gather into his own homestead. If he could find another country where the prince would not rob the lord, and the lord would not grind the tenant—where the earth ripened her fruits beneath warmer suns, and man required less sustenance to be earned by unremitting labour—there would he gladly go. The burgher, who crouched under the hill-castle of the proud earl, and did his servile work of smith-craft or carpentry, with small pay and heavy dues, would dream of a land where ignorant misbelievers lived in glorious mansions, rich with all the wealth of the East,—for so the pilgrims told of the Asiatic cities,—and that wealth might be his. The

foot-soldier, before whom the mounted men,—the favoured of the earls,—looked with contempt, would warm into a hero when the Pope spake of the Turks who fought at a distance with poisoned arrows,—the thin-blooded people, over whom the stalwart children of the West would make an easy conquest. To the feudal lord, to the tenant of his demesne, to the burgess of his town, to the common soldier who watched upon his ramparts,—the Crusade would offer the strongest incentives to the worldly-minded as well as to the enthusiastic. The mixture of motives made every crusader more or less alive to the higher influences. If wealth was not to be won, and new homes were not to be conquered, there were unearthly mansions prepared for the soldiers of the Cross. With one voice, therefore, the people in the market place of Clermont shouted,—*Deus lo volt; Deus lo volt.* "It is, indeed, the will of God," said the Pope. "Let that acclamation be your battle-cry. Wear the Cross as your sign and your solemn pledge."

The great army of the East was to be gathered together from all nations, by another year. But the impatience of the people would not wait for arms or leaders. In the March of 1096, a vast multitude set forward from France, gathering fresh crowds as they proceeded. The wonderful scenes of that year have been described by eye-witnesses. The peasant shod his oxen like horses, and yoking them to a cart, migrated with his wife and children; and the children, whenever they approached a town, cried out,—"Is this Jerusalem?" Lands were abandoned. Houses and chattels were sold for ready money by townsmen and husbandmen. The passion to reach Jerusalem extinguished all ordinary love of gain, and absorbed every other motive for exertion. Where Jerusalem was situate was to many a mystery. It was a far-distant land which a few pious and adventurous spirits had attained by difficult paths, over mountains and through deserts, and had returned to tell of its wonders and its dangers. It was a land where the fierce heathen kept possession of the holy seats which they despised, and where impure rites and demoniacal enchantments polluted the birth-place of the one true religion. The desire to see that land, if not to possess it, went through the most remote parts of Christian Europe. Wales, Scotland, Denmark, and Norway sent out their thousands, to join the great body that were moving on to the Rhine and the Danube. As they passed through the populous cities of Germany, the spirit of fanatical hatred which belonged to that age incited the multitude to pillage and massacre the Jews; and the best protectors of the unhappy race were the Christian bishops. This irregular host reached the frontiers of Austria, and then had to traverse the vast forests and morasses of Hungary and Bulgaria. Undisciplined, ill-provided, encumbered with women and children, their numbers had gradually been wasted by hunger and fatigue. They were led in two divisions, one of which was commanded by Peter the Hermit; the other by a soldier named Walter the Penniless. They irritated the inhabitants of the wild countries through which they passed, and suffered the most terrible defeats in Bulgaria. These were not the warlike bands that followed, under renowned and able leaders, in all the pomp and power of chivalry. In this irregular army there were only eight horsemen to fifteen thousand foot. At last the remnant of the hundred thousand that had undertaken this perilous journey reached Constantinople. The emperor would have treated them with kindness, but they began to plunder the beautiful

city, and they were driven out to seek the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. They here renewed their devastations, uncontrolled by any respect for their leader, Walter, or any care for their own safety; and they were finally routed and cut to pieces by the Turks. The regular army of the Crusaders at length approached Asia under the commanders whom History and Poetry have made famous,—Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois, Robert of Normandy, Robert of Flanders, Stephen of Chartres, Raymond of Toulouse, the ambitious Bohemond, and the accomplished Tancred. They came by different routes from their several countries. The history of their progress belongs not to our narrative. It was more than three years after Pope Urban had preached the crusade at Clermont, that Jerusalem fell, and the Holy Sepulchre was free. A terrible massacre disgraced this Christian triumph; and whilst the merciless conquerors knelt upon the sacred earth, they showed how little they comprehended the spirit of the religion whose sign they bore in that great warfare. But it is not the crimes of the fanatical warriors who won the Holy Land,



Crusaders approaching Jerusalem.

or the rashness of the ignorant multitudes who preceded them, that should lead us to speak of the Crusades "as the most signal and most durable monument of human folly that has ever yet appeared in any age or nation." * One who looks upon history with a more extended range of vision has pointed out that "the Crusades were the continuation, the zenith, of the grand struggle which had been going on for four centuries between Christianity and Mohammedanism." † Like all other great struggles of principle, they produced the most enduring influences upon the destinies of mankind; and, marked as was their course by

* Hume. † Guizot: Civilization in Europe.

the display of many evil passions, and many dangerous illusions, their tendency was to elevate the character of European life, and to prepare the way for the ultimate triumph of mental freedom and equal government.

Whilst Duke Robert was at the head of his knights and their horsemen in siege and battle; enduring privations unknown to the Norman military life; exposed to diseases peculiar to a climate so different from that of his own pleasant lands; William, the king, was foreclosing upon the property of Normandy like a grasping usurer. In 1095, "he crossed over the sea in the month of September, and obtaining possession of Normandy for the price he paid, trampled it under foot for nearly five years, that is, all the rest of his life." * Hume, without any distinct authority, but with a just estimate of the character of Rufus, has said, "it is likely that he made the romantic chivalry of the Crusades the object of his perpetual raillery." According to William's estimate of human affairs, his own business was to get as much as he could out of the less sordid impulses of those who fell into his toils. His borrowed dukedom, however, gave him some trouble. He renewed the old quarrel with the King of France about the Vexin territory. In the province of Maine also, which had been ceded to him, there was an obstinate baron, Helie, who was little disposed to submit to his domination, and relied upon the support of the people, by whom he was beloved. The Red King was too strong for the baron in the end. His contest in this petty war is characteristic of the energy and self-confidence which belonged to the descendant of "Robert the Devil." In 1099, William was hunting in the New Forest, when he received a message that Helie had defeated the Normans and surprised the city of Mans. Without drawing bit, he galloped to the coast, and jumped into a vessel lying at anchor. The day was stormy, and the sailors were unwilling to embark. "Sail instantly," cried the bold man, "kings are never drowned." He landed at Touques, a small port, and was soon at the head of his troops. Helie fled, without offering battle. In the siege of the castle of Maiet, William was held at bay; and finally marched back, after the accustomed fashion, "laying waste the enemy's country in every way, rooting up the vines, felling the fruit-trees, levelling walls and buildings, and ravaging the whole district, which was very rich, with fire and sword." †

In the July of 1099, at which time Duke Robert is marching into Jerusalem, King William is ravaging Maine. But he cannot leave England for long to its own guidance. Moreover, he wants more money from his island subjects; for the Duke of Guienne is willing to mortgage his dominions, that he may have the means of proceeding to the Holy Land. The ecclesiastics, too, are by no means well affected to their stern master, who had quarrelled with Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, and compelled him to flee from his dominions. The king has built Westminster-hall—a vast room, whose roof was supported by columns,—upon the site of the present noble structure, whose walls encase some of the timbers of the hall of Rufus. He has magnificent ideas; for he says that the hall shall be a mere bedroom compared with the palace which he means to build. He has erected a wall, too, around the Tower of London. Wherever he moves—and these Norman kings were constantly hurrying from city to city, and from castle to castle—the royal household plundered like an invading army. The king, in common with many other

* Ordericus Vitalis, book x. c. 4.

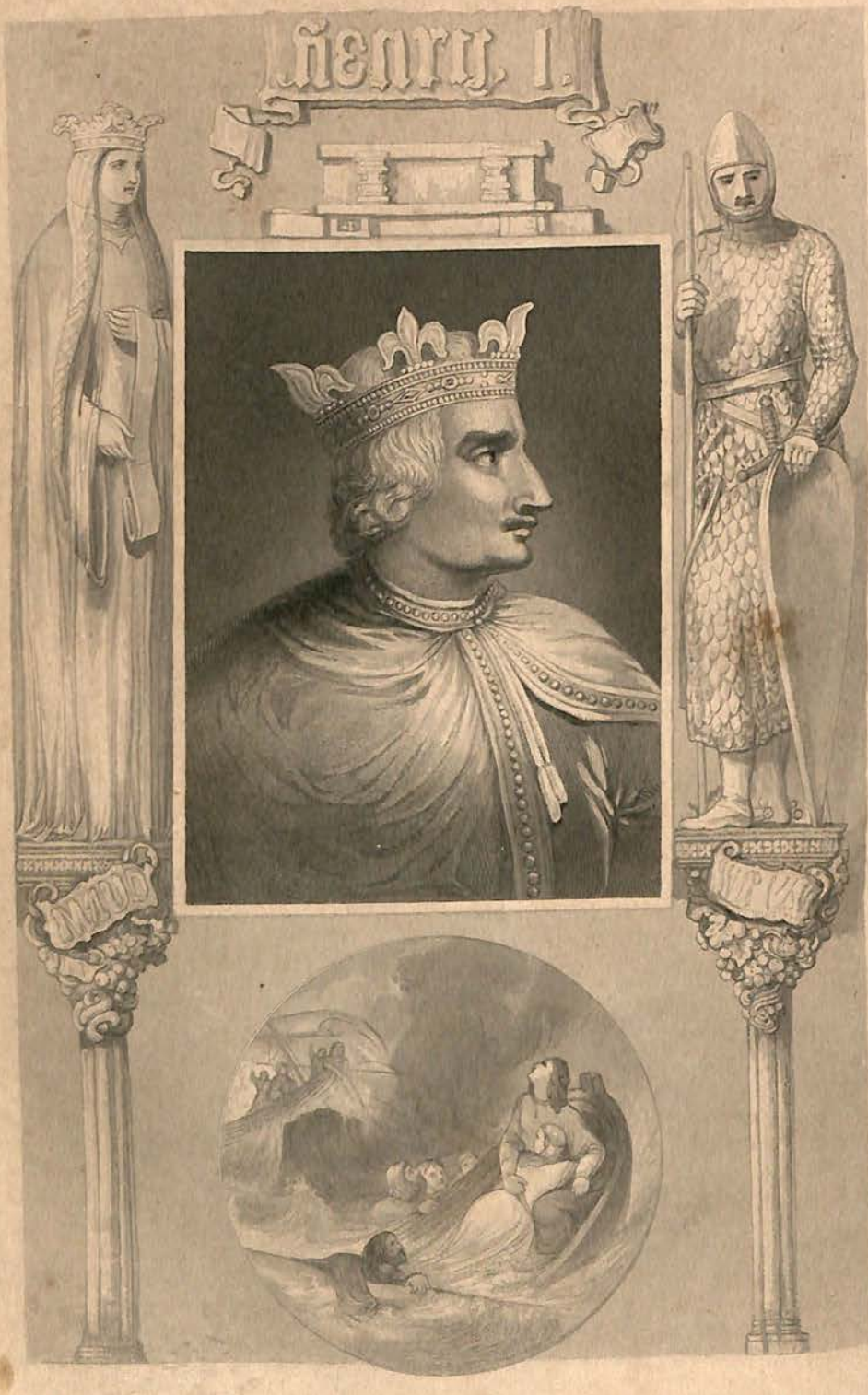
† Ibid., book x. c. 9.

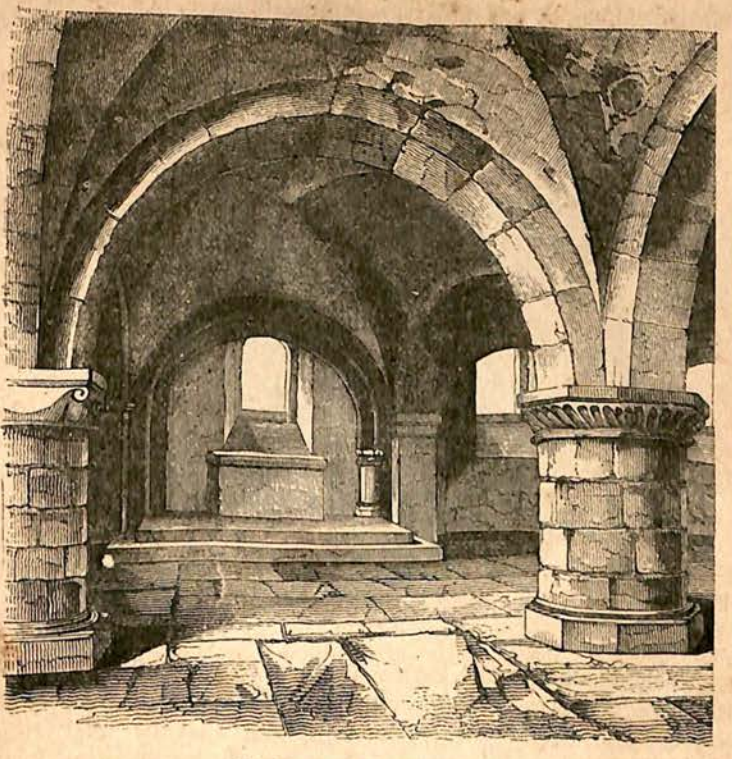
mighty tyrants, mingled jest with savagery. A Jew, whose son had become christianised, ventures to implore William to use his influence to bring the convert back to the faith of his fathers; and the king accepts the office for a present payment. The young man will not yield, and the Jew asks the king for his money again; he obtains only half, for the magnanimous prince keeps the other half as the payment for his trouble. These, and other anecdotes of his rapacity and want of reverence for all sacred things and high principles, may be the idle tales of the cloister; but they show how the chroniclers felt that this son of the Conqueror had all the defects of his father's character, without any of his great qualities, except that of courage; and was despised as well as hated by his contemporaries. Whether this hatred and contempt led to the final catastrophe, or whether it was the result of accident, cannot now be determined. William of Malmesbury tells the story with some picturesque circumstances, of which we shall avail ourselves. The king is in Malwood keep, in the New Forest, hunting and feasting. On the 1st of August, 1100, being asked where he would keep his Christmas, he says at Poitou, for he was speculating upon the new dominion which England's money would obtain from the Duke of Guienne. That night he has had dreams; and a certain foreign ecclesiastic also dreams about the king coming into a church with menacing looks, and, insulting the symbol of religion, was struck down by the image. This is told to William; who says, "he is a monk, and dreams for money like a monk: give him a hundred shillings." But he is moved and dispirited, and will not hunt. Dinner comes, with copious draughts of wine; and then he will ride in the forest. He is alone with Walter Tyrrel. The sun is declining. The king has drawn his bow and wounded a stag; he is shading his eyes from the strong level light, when Walter, aiming at another stag, pierces the king's breast with a fatal arrow which glances from a tree. Breaking off the shaft of the arrow, William falls from his horse, and "speaks word never more." Walter immediately runs up to the body, and then leaps upon his horse, none perceiving him. A few countrymen convey the body in a cart to Winchester, and there "it was committed to the ground within the tower, attended by many of the nobles, though lamented by few." In a hall of no great antiquity in the pretty town of Lyndhurst, hangs the stirrup which tradition, from time immemorial, asserts was attached to the saddle from which Rufus fell, when struck by the arrow of Walter Tyrrel. It is recorded also that the man who picked up the body was a charcoal-burner, of the name of Purkess, living in the village of Minstead, in the forest, and that on his cart was the corpse removed to Winchester. In that village in 1843 we saw the name of Purkess over the door of a little shop; and Mr. Stewart Rose, who held an office in the forest, records that the charcoal-burner's descendants have always lived in this village, where they still live, the possessors of one horse and cart, and no more. There was a stone erected in "green Malwood," by Lord Delaware, in 1745, upon a spot where the tree is said to have stood from which the arrow of Tyrrel glanced. In the time of Leland, there was a chapel built upon the site. After our visit to this interesting and beautiful glade, which Gilpin has described as "a sweet sequestered bottom, open to the west, where the corner of a heath sinks gently into it, but sheltered on the east by a beechen grove,"*

* Forest Scenery, vol. ii.

we thus wrote :—"It would be a wise act of the Crown to found a school here—a better way of continuing a record than Lord Delaware's stone. The history of their country, its constitution, its privileges; the duties and the rights of Englishmen—things which are not taught to the children of our labouring millions—might worthily commence to be taught on the spot where the Norman tyrant fell, leaving successors who, one by one, came to acknowledge that the people were something not to be neglected or despised."

Vignette from the poem of "The Red King."


Henry I.



The Treasury at Westminster.

CHAPTER XVII.

Prince Henry seizes the treasures of the crown—Coronation of Henry I.—Charter of Liberties—Marriage with Matilda—Duke Robert invades England—Henry punishes disaffected Barons—Hostile movements of Henry in Normandy—Battle of Tinchenbrai—Battle of Noyon—Death of Queen Matilda—Eustace and Juliana—The Blanche-Nef—Geoffrey Plantagenet—Death of King Henry—Prophecies of Merlin.

On the 2nd of August, in the year 1100, there was a chase from Malwood, across the New Forest, and onward to Winchester, in which chase the prey was of far greater importance than stag or boar. Henry, to whom his father gave five thousand pounds as his inheritance, with an injunction to bide his time, found that his time for accomplishing all that his loftiest ambition could desire had at length arrived. He had been riding near the spot where William fell. Immediately that the death of his brother was certain, he spurred his horse along the green glades, for a gallop of twenty miles in that autumn evening. But another horseman was at his heels. William de Breteuil, the treasurer of Rufus, divined the prince's purpose. They arrived at Winchester at the same hour. Henry hastened to the Treasury, which probably was in some strong vault of the Castle, similar to

the arched chamber of the Treasury at Westminster, in the Cloister of the Abbey next the Chapter-house, in which the pix is still contained.* The prince

authoritatively demanded the keys. William de Breteuil insisted that they should not be given up, saying that Prince Henry, as well as himself, had paid Robert, the elder brother, homage, and that he was the rightful successor. Henry drew his sword, and at length, by force and persuasion, obtained the royal treasures. The next step was easy. He was crowned at Westminster on Sunday the 5th of August.

Duke Robert, after the conquest of Jerusalem, had set out homeward. It is related that the crown of Jerusalem, which was ultimately worn by Godfrey of Bouillon, had been offered to him. He preferred his dukedom. Passing through the Norman dominions in Italy, he was cordially received at the court of Geoffrey of Conversana, in Apulia; and there, amidst all the refinements of a chivalric life, he lingered long, and finally married Sibylla, the daughter of his entertainer. With his young and beauteous wife he received a marriage-portion, amply sufficient to redeem his mortgaged dukedom. They arrived in Normandy, within a few weeks after Henry was firmly seated on the throne of England.

The sovereignty of Henry was so clearly an usurpation, that, with that prudence, however selfish, which belonged to his character, he sought to conciliate all classes of his subjects. He published a charter of liberties in 1101, in which he engaged to put in force the laws of Edward the Confessor, which the Anglo-Saxon race had so earnestly demanded. To the Church he promised that he would retain no vacant benefices, nor sell them, nor farm them. He granted to his immediate vassals—and required that they should grant the same to their sub-vassals—to be in future free from arbitrary exactions in the form of reliefs; that the lord should not interfere with the

* "Introduction to Kalendars, &c., of the Exchequer:" by Sir F. Palgrave.

marriage of their daughters; and that heiresses and widows should not be compelled to marry against their will.* He, however, retained the royal forests, and the forest laws. It was a very large concession to the public good. Like many subsequent charters and ordinances, it soon became inoperative in many of its provisions.

It is now thirty-five years since the Conquest. A generation has passed away, to whom the name of Norman was odious. Two kings have gone to their account, with whom the name of Saxon was associated with the character of slave. The third king of the Norman race is, probably, as little English in his heart as his father and brother; but he knows how essential the English support is to his safety. The reign of Henry is not a struggle against the resistance of the Saxons, but a perpetual conflict against the disaffection of the Normans. There is a gradual progress, therefore, towards the condition in which the Normans should become Anglicised, and Norman domination should be lost in English independence. The transition state of the period of Henry I. is, in many respects, one of the most interesting of our history. It is not marked by any very great events. The course of political action is, in its general character, monotonous and languid. There is a perpetual contest of local and class interests. The battle of feudal selfishness is chiefly removed from the island to the continent. England has a long rest from the devastations of war, though she knows its cost. The Church is becoming a great power, that stands between the people and their tyrants, and which upholds, though in no slavish spirit, the one regal tyrant as the lesser evil. There are several contemporary historians of this period; and out of their narratives, the more trustworthy in proportion as they are rambling and ill-digested, may be constructed a tolerably complete view of the first half of the twelfth century.

The court of Rufus had been contemptible for its unscrupulous profligacy. Whilst his father, amidst all his self-will and ferocity, had manifested a respect for the decencies of life and the sanctities of religion, his successor had offended the churchmen by his profaneness, and the laity by his licentiousness. Surrounded by men of abandoned lives, his scurrilous jests and his brutal voluptuousness made him as odious as his energetic tyranny made him dreaded. Henry lived in that court, and he partook of its voluptuousness, whilst his cultivated intellect revolted at its grossness. He had many of the high qualities of his father, with an amount of adroit duplicity, which his father scarcely condescended to exercise. Upon his accession he purged his government of the evil ministers of his brother's pleasures, and the corrupt administrators of his oppressive exactions. Ralph Flambard, the bishop of Durham, who was particularly obnoxious, was committed to the Tower, whence he contrived to escape to Normandy. His friends had conveyed to him a rope in a pitcher of wine, and after a night of carousal with those who should have guarded him, he let himself down by a window, and reached the coast in safety, where he found a ship ready to bear him across the channel He soon became an instrument of mischief at the court of Duke Robert. Meanwhile Henry had married. His choice of a queen appears to have been decided by a just and wise desire to propitiate the English population. Maud, the daughter of Malcolm, king of Scotland, and of Margaret, the sister

* See p. 216.

of Edgar the Etheling, was of the lineage of the Saxon kings. She had been brought up under the care of her aunt, the Abbess of Wilton, who, to preserve her from the Norman warriors, who seized upon the Saxon maidens as wives or mistresses, had caused her to wear the veil, though she had not taken the vows. After many discussions amongst the ecclesiastics, it was

held that Maud was not bound to celibacy; and the king, "having been long attracted by her many graces and virtues," according to Ordericus, shared his throne with her, and she was crowned by Gerard, bishop of Hereford.

This marriage, which, as we have before mentioned, was called "The Union of the Races," was a cause of offence to the imperious Norman nobles. The queen's name, as a Saxon maiden, was Edith; but her name was changed to Maud, or Matilda, as having a more agreeable sound to the Norman ear. The proud countrymen of Henry gave him the nickname of Godric, and the queen that of Godiva—both conveying some opprobrium. "This marriage was regarded as a marriage between a white planter and a quadroon girl

would now be regarded in Virginia." * Yet, supported as Henry was by the best of the Churchmen, and especially by Anselm, the honest and enlightened bishop of Canterbury, who had been recalled and re-invested, the union might have tended to produce a more united people, at an earlier period than that when the distinctions of race were forgotten in common interests, had there been a wiser sovereign in Normandy. Robert, though his claim to the crown of England was founded upon the strict right of succession, would have evinced more sagacity to have been content with the expressed desire of his father, that one brother should rule Normandy and another England. He was misled by the belief that the Norman barons and their Norman followers were all-powerful in England. He had conducted himself with skill and bravery as a leader in the Crusade; but as the ruler of a kingdom he was manifestly inferior to the politic Henry. The exiled bishop of Durham was one of his chief advisers in an invasion of England in 1101. The king was prepared for the danger, and had disciplined the English, upon whom he could rely more confidently than upon the barons and their followers. The Duke of Normandy landed at Portsmouth on the 1st of August. Some of the Norman barons openly joined him: others secretly encouraged his pretensions. Robert marched from the coast, and the two armies pitched their camps near each other.

Matilda. From a statue in the west door of Rochester Cathedral.

Henry desired a conference with his brother; and they met in the presence of the hostile troops, who "formed a magnificent circle round them, displaying the terrible but brilliant spectacle of the Normans and English under arms." † They were reconciled. Robert was of a generous and a yielding nature; Henry was far-seeing and prudent. A treaty was concluded without umpires; of which the chief article was that Robert relinquished his claims upon England. The rivalry between the brothers was not subdued; but the blood of two hostile races was no more to be poured out upon English ground. Robert and his army returned to Normandy; and the troops of Henry were disbanded, after the duke had remained a guest for several months at the court of the king.

In the following year Henry, of whom clemency was not an attribute, commenced a series of persecutions against those of his barons who had favoured the enterprise of Robert. They were protected by the treaty of 1101, in which there was an amnesty for political offences. But the king brought many of them to trial, on charges which had probably some solid

* Macaulay: History, vol. i. † Ordericus Vitalis, book x. c. 18.

foundation, though urged with acrimony, and punished with severity. Thus, Ivo de Grantesmenil, was subjected to an enormous fine, for having "set the example of engaging in war on his own account, and given to the flames the territories of his neighbours, such private wars being hitherto unknown in England." * Unquestionably Henry was right in allowing no such wars to devastate England as were then raging in Normandy; and which in the next reign of Stephen rendered our country a desert. If the king was not magnanimous in punishing under legal forms those who had offended him by their disaffection, we may still believe that the great mass of the people were not injured by his severity. One of the principal offenders was Robert de Belèsme, earl of Shrewsbury. No one of the Norman chieftains was more cruel or rapacious, no one more powerful. The king had surrounded him with spies, and preferred many charges against him of the heaviest nature. The earl fled to his castles, and refused to appear to abide a trial. Henry immediately called out the whole military force of the country, so formidable was this baron. His castles of Arundel and Blythe surrendered; and Bridgenorth, after a long siege, was opened to the royal troops. Robert de Belèsme had possession of Shrewsbury, and the king marched with a vast army to besiege the town, by a road called the "Huvel Hegen"—which Ordericus interprets as the evil way—more properly the evil hedge. The description of this road presents a curious feature of a large town still protected by an old Saxon wood on one side, whilst a river, the Severn, was a natural defence to the rising ground round which it flowed. "This road was for a thousand paces full of holes, and the surface rough with large stones, and so narrow that two men on horseback could scarcely pass each other. . . . There were more than sixty thousand infantry in the expedition; and the king gave orders that they should clear a broad track by cutting down the wood with axes, so that a road might be formed for his own passage, and a public highway for ever afterwards." The rebel earl surrendered, and was banished; and at the fall of the tyrant, according to Ordericus, "all England was in a tumult of joy." The same chronicler adds, "Robert de Belèsme, having been thus expelled, the realm of Albion enjoyed peace and tranquillity; and during the thirty-three years of Henry's subsequent reign no one afterwards dared to revolt in England, nor held any fortress against him." But the terrible earl, who had vast estates in Normandy, went over to a land where there was no energetic ruler to oppose him; and for several years ravaged the country, and defied the power of the duke, who had entered into a mutual engagement with Henry to make common cause against any traitor to either of them. At length Duke Robert concluded a peace with the fierce earl, and admitted him to his patrimonial estates. There was now a new cause for enmity between the reigning brothers. The catastrophe was fast approaching which had been long foreseen.

The natural and laudable desire to take part with the weak against the strong has given a colour to the popular view of the reign of Henry I. The eminent ability of the king, as a ruler, has been overshadowed by the heartlessness of his conduct as a brother. Yet, even the unbending determination with which Henry made himself master of Normandy, and held Robert a prisoner to the end of a long life, cannot be wholly referred to the

* Ordericus Vitalis, book xi. c. 2.

obdurate hostility and calculating ambition of the wiser and more powerful of the two princes. There is nothing more clear than the general course of Henry's policy from the commencement of his reign. He was determined to be supreme in England; to hold in check the tyranny of the great vassals of the crown; to cultivate friendly relations with the Anglo-Saxon people; to respect the authority and maintain the possessions of the Church, without yielding an unreserved obedience to the pretensions of the Papacy. Had there been a sovereign of equally vigorous character in Normandy, it is possible that Henry might have been content with his island dominions. But the loose authority of Robert was a perpetual danger to Henry; for in repressing the enormities of the barons in England he roused the sympathies of their connexions in Normandy, and tranquillity in the island was uncertain whilst there was constant disaffection on the continent. Many of the Anglo-Norman barons were also vassals of the crown in Normandy, and thus there was a perpetual conflict of interests, whilst the policies of the two countries was discordant. The Norman ecclesiastics were, moreover, subjected to constant outrage and terror under the feeble administration of Duke Robert. Mailed freebooters, with high-sounding titles, ravaged the country, with no central power either of arms or law to control and punish. No doubt, the ambition of Henry, criminal as it might have been in his family relations, but in some degree justifiable in his sovereign character, was ready to avail itself of its opportunities in the misrule of his brother. The story of his acquisition of Normandy, and of his subsequent wars for its safe possession, may be very briefly told as regards its leading events; but the accessories of that story, as related by the contemporary chroniclers, and especially by Ordericus Vitalis, are amongst the most curious illustrations of the feudal times.

Robert of Normandy had lost his wife in 1102. The corrupt manners of the times were immediately exhibited in the personal conduct of the unhappy prince; and for three or four years his example was one of public offence. In 1104, Henry went over to Normandy. Many of the nobles, who had also estates in England, gathered round him, and stimulated what was no doubt the secret desire of his heart; yet the brothers parted friends. Again the province was ravaged by the private hostilities of those who were considered the friends of Henry, and those who hated him. The country people in many districts fled into France, leaving their lands uncultivated. In the spring of 1105, the king of England took a final step towards the union of the two crowns. There is a dramatic interest in his cautious and half-reluctant approaches to the deposition of his brother, which reminds us of the well-known passage of a later history, when Glo'ster is urged "of his accustomed goodness and zeal unto the realm, now with his eye of pity to behold the long-continued distress and decay of the same." * Henry landed on Easter Eve, at the small port of Barbaflot; and slept at the village of Carentan. On Easter Sunday he went in the most private manner to the church, where Serlo, the bishop of Séez, was to officiate at the solemnities of the great festival. The king had taken his place at the lower end of the church, seated amongst peasants' panniers, and household goods of every kind, with which the place was encumbered. The bishop took this desecration as his theme. The spectacle exhibited in the church shows the desolation of the Cotentin. All Normandy

* Sir Thomas More's "Tragical History of Richard III."

is a prey to freebooters. This edifice is, for want of a just protector, become the storehouse of the people. The goods heaped up in this house of God are brought here by the defenceless peasants to save them from the sons of violence. Rouse yourself then, O king, in the name of the Lord, and with the sword of justice make yourself master of your father's inheritance. Your brother Robert is abandoned to sloth and folly. He is surrounded by buffoons and harlots, who plunder him even of his clothes. Take arms, then, to redress this affliction of the land. Take arms, and recover the territory of your ancestors, and rescue the people from the dominion of abandoned men. And then the king said—"In God's name, I will not shrink from toiling earnestly for the restoration of peace." The bishop then went on to inveigh against the fashions of the time—against long hair, and long beards, and peaked-toed shoes; and exhorted the king to testify by his example against these abominations. The king was ready with his testimony; and forthwith the zealous bishop produced a pair of scissors out of his scrip, and cropped, first the king's hair, with his own hand. Then the flowing locks of the Earl of Mellent,—"the glass of fashion," as well as the most sagacious councillor of the English court—were subjected to the fatal shears. After these examples the royal household and the other great men of the congregation, contended with each other who should be cropped first. This farce went before the tragedy. Very shortly after, the king took Bayeux by assault, and burnt it to the ground. The people of Caen surrendered their fortress. At Whitsuntide, Henry and Robert had a conference, without coming to agreement. The Normans took their several sides; and the country was burnt and pillaged. Henry returned to England for money and men. But in 1106 he was in Normandy with a far greater force, and constructed a fort before Tenchebrai. The place was vigorously defended by William, earl of Morton; and Duke Robert came to his relief, with a large force of Norman chivalry. Henry was strong in his infantry both English and Norman. There was some negociation before the decisive battle, which took place on the 28th of September, the anniversary of William the Conqueror's landing at Hastings. When the ranks met, "the troops were thronged so closely, and their weapons so locked together, that it was out of their power to injure each other, and both parties in turn attempted in vain to break the impenetrable phalanx." The details of the battle are rather meagre, beyond this curious circumstance related by Ordericus. One of Henry's chaplains, Baudri, took the duke prisoner, after he had gallantly fought with unequal numbers. The contest was over. Amongst other prisoners was Edgar the Etheling, who passed the remainder of his eventful life in England, without molestation, an object of pity rather than of fear. The deposed Duke Robert was kept a prisoner in Cardiff Castle. Eleven years later, Pope Calixtus met King Henry at Gison; and when exhorted by the pontiff to release his brother, said, "I have not caused him to be bound in fetters like a captive enemy, but treating him like a noble pilgrim worn by long sufferings, I have placed him in a royal castle, and supplied his tables and wardrobe with all kinds of luxuries." We may believe in the luxuries or not; but there are entries in the accounts called "The Pipe Rolls," which show that in 1131 the Count of Normandy, as he is termed, was supplied with new clothes. The story of his eyes being put out, by the organs of sight

being seared over a red-hot basin, rests upon no contemporary authority. William of Malmesbury, who wrote whilst Duke Robert was alive, says, "he endured no evil but solitude, if that can be called solitude where, by the attention of his keepers, he was provided with abundance both of amusement and of food. He was confined, however, till he had survived all his companions in the crusade, and whether he ever will be set free is doubtful." In another manuscript of Malmesbury's chronicle, we find this reading—"nor was he liberated till the day of his death." That release from a captivity of twenty-eight years arrived in 1135.

At the time of the battle of Tenchebrai, Duke Robert had a son of five years old, who had been brought up at Falaise. When Henry took possession of the place, the little boy was led to him. This possible heir of two kingdoms bore the name of his grandfather; and the William of five years old shrank with terror from his conquering uncle. Henry used no violence to the child, but committed him to an honest guardianship. The king appears, in another year, to have repented of his honesty, and to have desired to get the young prince into his power. But Helie de St. Saen fled with his charge; and put him under the protection of Louis, king of France, and Fulk, earl of Anjou. As the boy grew, the interests connected with him became more complicated. He was first patronised, and afterwards cast off, by the earl of Anjou. The king of France used him as an instrument to check the growing power of Henry. At length there was open war between France and Normandy, and in 1119 was fought the battle of Noyon, or Brenneville, a place on the road from Rouen to Paris. Louis was here defeated, and fled. The battle was not a sanguinary one; and was remarkable for the comparative safety with which the horsemen in complete harness encountered each other. Ordericus says, "In the battle between the two

Masoled Armour.—Seal of Milo Fitz-Walter, Constable of England under Henry I.

kings, in which nearly nine hundred knights were engaged, I have ascertained that three only were slain. This arose from their being entirely covered with steel armour, and mutually sparing each other for the fear of God, and out of regard for the fraternity of arms." The knights might spare each other, but

the people were little spared. The chronicler adds, "The whole country was a desert in consequence of the wars which raged so furiously." And yet there was an influence counteracting the violence of these intestine wars of Normandy, which "the philosophical historian," writing in a spirit very different from that of philosophy, invariably calls "superstition." Ordericus records that after the battle of Noyon, a certain knight, who was essentially a free-booter, was driving out the cattle, and carrying away the booty, of a village which he had plundered, when the peasants came out in a numerous body to attempt the recovery of their few worldly possessions. An armed band, of whose numbers they were unaware, turned round upon them, to slay and make captive. The peasants fled, and in their terror fell upon their knees before a way-side cross, and implored the succour of Heaven. The plunderers stopped in reverent pity, and the destitute people were spared. But piety and chivalry never failed to oppress by indirect power. Huntingdon, under the same date, records that "this year the English were grievously burdened with continual taxes and various exactions occasioned by the king's wants."

In 1118 "the good queen Maud" died. Henry was probably not inconsolable; for she had long retired to the monastery of Westminster, where she spent her revenues in the relief of the sick, and in acts of penitential piety. She had, in the early years of her marriage, when Anselm was an exile from England, in consequence of his dispute with Henry about the right of investiture, considerable influence over her husband, if we may judge from a passage in one of her letters to the prelate. In this letter she says, speaking of the king, "His mind is not so provoked against you as some men think; and by God's good will, with my suggestions, which shall not be wanting, he will be more disposed to concord." In a true Christian spirit she implores the archbishop to be "a kind intercessor with God both for him and me, and our little ones, and the prosperity of our kingdom." She had died, without enduring the sharpest pang that a mother can feel,—the untimely death of one of those "little ones" now growing to manhood. Her daughter had been betrothed to the Emperor of Germany in 1108, and was married in 1114; and the king, on the feudal principle, taxed every hide in England three shillings upon that occasion. The story of the son's death has presently to be related.

Silver Penny of Henry I. From specimen in British Museum.

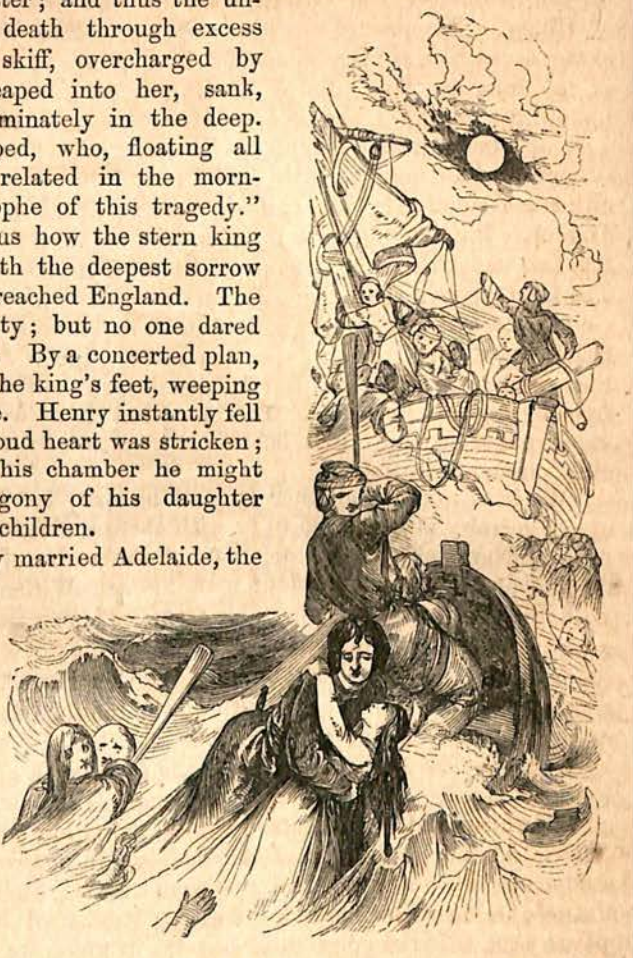
In 1119, William the Etheling,—the Saxon title being still applied to the heir to the crown,—was married to the daughter of Fulk, count of Anjou. The young prince remained in Normandy; and peace having been restored between Henry and the king of France, did homage to that king, Louis-le-Gros, for the fief of Normandy. At this season there was a general amity, and the most horrible violations of the rights of humanity appear to have left no enduring remorse, and to have presented no impediment to such friendships as the strong may form with the weak. The king of England had many illegitimate daughters, and one was married to Eustace of Breteuil. There had been deadly enmity between the king and his son-in-law, in which his daughter partook with a passion which demands excuse and pity. In 1118,

Eustace and the king had a dispute about the castle of Ivri; but Henry was desirous to retain the allegiance of Eustace, and it was agreed that hostages should be exchanged. Ralph Harenc, the commander of the fortress, gave his son to Eustace, and Eustace gave his two little daughters to the custody of Henry. The quarrel was not made up, and the Count of Breteuil, with a savageness which is even wonderful in that age of ferocity, put out the eyes of the innocent boy. Ralph de Harenc, in a transport of rage, presented himself to the king, and demanded vengeance. Henry, without hesitation, gave up his two grand-daughters. Was that stern heart torn with agony at the danger of these helpless little ones? or did the honour of chivalry extinguish all natural emotion? The children were sacrificed to the revenge of Ralph de Harenc. But the mother's injuries were too deep for a common indignation. She had undertaken the defence of Breteuil in the absence of her husband. The king pressed the siege. Juliana appeared on the walls, and demanded a conference with her father; and when he appeared she launched a bolt at him from a cross-bow. Henry, who was unhurt, broke down the drawbridge, so that escape was difficult. But Juliana dropt from the wall into the fosse, on a freezing night in February. In 1119, when Henry was everywhere victorious, Eustace and his wife knelt before the king in his tent; and there was reconciliation and forgiveness.

We have to relate another tragical history; but it is not one in which an age of chivalry is presented to us with abhorrent features. Henry was about to leave Normandy in the early part of the winter of 1120. On the 25th of November he was at Barfleur with his son William, and his natural son Richard, with many a noble in his train. There came to him a mariner, and said, that Stephen, the son of Airard, was his father, and that Stephen was the owner of the ship that conveyed the Conqueror to make war on Harold; and he asked the king to sail with him in his ship, the Blanche-Nef. Henry replied he had chosen his ship, but that his son might sail with the son of Airard. The king put to sea in the first watch of the night, and reached England in safety. The young prince and his companions went on board full of merriment and wine, and the rowers and their steersman were mad with drink. As they pulled out of the harbour, incapable of directing the vessel, she struck upon a rock, filled, and went down. One man only, out of three hundred on board, was saved—Berold, a butcher of Rouen. A writer,—who knows well that the episodes of history, in which we see the workings of the human heart amidst the craft of policy and the ferocity of war, are amongst the most valuable of what old records have preserved to us,—has said—"I should be sorry to lose faith in the account of the death of the eldest son of the first Henry, who, when the ship in which he had sailed for England went down, and he was safely within the boat, put back to save his favourite sister, and perished along with her." * We may trust the relation of Malmesbury, a contemporary writer, and need not lose faith in the affection of the ill-starred youth. His narrative is not so minute as that of Ordericus, but it is perfectly distinct and circumstantial. He says,—"The water washed some of the crew overboard, and, entering the chinks, drowned others; when the boat having been launched, the young prince was received into it, and might certainly have been saved by reaching the shore, had not his illegitimate sister, the Countess

* "Landmarks of the History of England," by the Rev. J. White.

of Perche, now struggling with death in the larger vessel, implored her brother's assistance; shrieking out that he should not abandon her so barbarously. Touched with pity, he ordered the boat to return to the ship, that he might rescue his sister; and thus the unhappy youth met his death through excess of affection; for the skiff, overcharged by the multitudes who leaped into her, sank, and buried all indiscriminately in the deep. One rustic alone escaped, who, floating all night upon the mast, related in the morning the dismal catastrophe of this tragedy." We are told by Ordericus how the stern king was made acquainted with the deepest sorrow of his life. The news reached England. The king was in great anxiety; but no one dared to tell him of the event. By a concerted plan, a boy threw himself at the king's feet, weeping bitterly, and told his tale. Henry instantly fell to the ground. That proud heart was stricken; and in the solitude of his chamber he might have thought of the agony of his daughter Juliana weeping for her children.



In 1121, King Henry married Adelaide, the daughter of the Duke of Louvain. They had no issue. The unhappy death of Prince William excited renewed attention to the claims of his cousin, the son of Robert. He seemed destined to the throne of England. Fulk of Anjou affianced the Norman prince to his daughter. But Henry set in motion all his instruments of policy, and succeeded in preventing the marriage. His enemies in Normandy took up the cause of the son of Robert, and the king of France bestowed on him the hand of his sister-in-law. Finally he succeeded to the earldom of Flanders. He was now in a position of great power and prosperity, and stood in the way of the far-seeing designs of the king of England. Henry's only legitimate child, Matilda, was destined by him to inherit his greatness. The empress of Germany had become a widow in 1124; and at the Christmas of 1126, at a solemn assembly at Windsor, of nobles, and bishops, and the great tenants of the crown, it was declared that the ex-empress was the next heir, failing any future legitimate male issue to the king. They then all swore to maintain her succession; and amongst the nobles who took the oath was Stephen, Earl of Boulogne, the son of Adela, the daughter of the Conqueror;

and Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry. David, king of Scotland, who was present as an English earl, also swore to maintain the succession of his niece Matilda. That Christmas day of 1126 was to be fruitful of years of calamity for England.

Geoffrey Plantagenet. From MS. in British Museum.

Fulk, the earl of Anjou, had surrendered his European states to his eldest son Geoffrey, for he had accepted the higher dignity of King of Jerusalem. An alliance with the Plantagenets was one of the great objects of Henry's ambition; and he negociated a marriage of Matilda with the young earl. Their nuptials were solemnised at Rouen at the Whitsuntide of 1127. This marriage of policy was not a happy one. The king had constantly to interfere between the husband and wife. Matilda had much of her father's imperious spirit; and Geoffrey made demands which Henry resisted. There was deep enmity between them. But in 1133 Matilda bore a son, Henry. The oaths to maintain the succession were renewed. Before this period, however, the king had been freed from much disquiet, by the death of his nephew, William the earl of Flanders, who was wounded under the walls of Alost in 1128, in a revolt headed by the Earl of Alsace, and fomented, no doubt, by the intrigues of the English king.

The hour at last came when the fine scholar was to feel that his learning had not taught him the highest wisdom, and his ambition had not conducted him on the path of happiness. The castle of Lions, about six leagues from Rouen, was his favourite hunting-seat, and he arrived there on the 25th of

November, 1135. He had not lost his active habits at the age of sixty-five, and he gave orders for the chace on the next day. But the next day saw him sick. He had feasted upon a dish of lampreys, and after four days he died, beating his breast, and lamenting his sins.*

Towards the end of the reign of Henry I., Geoffrey of Monmouth, at the desire of Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, made a Latin translation of the prophecies of Merlin, from the British tongue. To publish a book, at that period, was to set the transcribers to work in the European monasteries; and thus the knowledge of any remarkable performance very soon became general. These prophecies, which were afterwards incorporated in Geoffrey's "Historia Britonum," were, like the semi-fabulous history of which they now form a portion, filled with the most startling images of dragons, white and red; wolves, lions, serpents, goats with golden horns and silver beards, and foxes with asses' heads; brazen horses and brazen men; Orion and the Pleiades; Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, and Venus; Gemini, that forget their embraces; and Libra with oblique scales.† How this "skimble-skamble stuff" would delight and terrify an ignorant and superstitious people is not difficult to imagine. It is only when Merlin comes into the immediate times in which Geoffrey produced the prophet, in a tongue which the monks could read and expound, that there is a distinctness and reality which contrasts with the vagueness with which he pretends to look at the distant future through this wonderful atmosphere. That portion of the prophecies which clearly relates to the time of Henry I. is extremely curious, as showing the popular estimate of some of the leading characteristics of the man and of his reign; and it will be at least amusing to compare the mystical allusions with the historical facts.

"A people shall come over, on timber, and in coats of iron, who shall execute vengeance for iniquity." Geoffrey, if of doubtful value as a prophet, is an excellent witness to the still enduring hatred of the British race to the Saxon. The ship-borne Normans, in their coats of mail, "shall restore the ancient inhabitants to their homes." The Saxon race, that of "the strangers," shall be "decimated," and "they shall bear the yoke of perpetual servitude, and shall tear their mother with ploughs and harrows." This is no untrue picture of the Saxon serfs, as they laboured for the Normans seventy years after the Conquest. We come to two dragons, one of whom is clearly Rufus, who is "slain by the darts of malice,"—the other, Robert of Normandy, "the shadow of a name." We are now in the midst of Geoffrey's contemporary history. "A lion of justice shall succeed." By this name was

* "The death of great men is not always proportioned to the lustre of their lives. Hannibal, says Juvenal, did not perish by a javelin or a sword; the slaughters of Cannæ were revenged by a ring. The death of Pope was imputed by some of his friends to a silver saucepan, in which it was his delight to heat potted lampreys."—Johnson's "Lives of the Poets."

† Shakspere was well read in Merlin:—

"Sometime he angers me,
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin, and his prophecies;
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-winged griffin, and a moulten raven,
A crouching lion, and a ramping cat,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
As puts me from my faith."—*Henry IV.*, Part i. act iii. sc. 1.

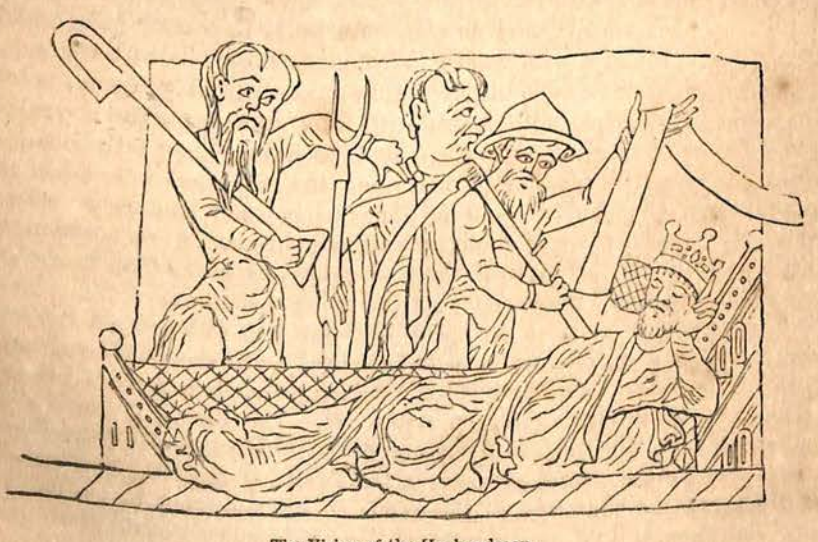
King Henry ever after popularly known. The "lion of justice" did indeed make wild work with thieves and other offenders. Upon his accession the country was ravaged by spoilers. In 1124 "the lion of justice" put to death forty-four robbers who had been tried and convicted at a court at Huncot, in Leicestershire. The coin was debased and worn, and those who counterfeited this miserable currency were to be found in every town. The evils were enormous, as they have always continued to be when no man could take a piece of silver with certainty that he had received value for his goods. The lion terrified the culprits into honesty, by mutilating them in such numbers that on one occasion out of fifty, only four escaped the loss of the right hand. Horrible barbarity of a barbarous age, we exclaim. And yet, after five hundred years of civilisation, the Stuarts cut off the ears of libellers with as little remorse. The roar of the lion caused "the towns of France to tremble." We have seen something of the consequences of this roar. But "the dragons of the island" also trembled. The ravaging barons were these dragons. "In his days gold shall be extorted from the lily and the nettle." The submission of the lily (the Church), and the resistance of the nettle (the army), could not save their treasures from the king's gripe. "Silver," too, "shall be scattered abroad by the hoofs of lowing kine." The herdsman was as severely taxed as the priest and the soldier. There is a curious illustration of the mode in which the various classes of the nation bore the royal exactions. A legend is related by the Chroniclers, that, in 1130, Henry dreamed a terrible dream, which had a warning influence upon his subsequent conduct. He first saw a great multitude of rustics, with spades, and forks, and scythes, who stood over him with threatening looks; and when they vanished, soldiers, with spears, and swords, and shields, were ready to destroy him; and these passing away, bishops, with crosier in hand, gazed on him with countenances in anger, as if their mission of peace were at an end. The legend, as told in an ancient manuscript, is illustrated with three drawings of the several stages of the dream, of which we give the one of the husbandmen. Eadmer relates, that in the merciless taxation of that reign, the very doors were taken off the houses when the people could no longer pay; and another contemporary writer says, that a troop of unhappy cultivators came, on one occasion, to the king's palace, and threw down their ploughshares at his feet, for the capital was exhausted which alone could set the ploughs at work.

The prophecy goes on to speak of "the men with crisped locks," who wore "clothes of various textures and colours"—the abominations denounced by the Churchmen, as we have seen. It then proceeds to a more serious evil. "The feet of lurchers shall be struck off. The beasts of chase shall be undisturbed." The historical facts are told by Ordericus: "Reserving for his own sport the beasts of chase in the forests of England, he even caused all dogs kept on the verge of the woods to be mutilated, by having one of their claws chopped off; and reluctantly licensed some few of the greater nobles and his particular friends to have the privilege of hunting in their own forests." Amongst those who had this privilege were the nobles, bishops, and burgesses of London,—the citizens, according to Henry's charter,* being warranted to "have their hunting grounds for hunting, as was best and most fully enjoyed by their predecessors, that is, in Chiltern, in Middlesex, and in

* This charter will be more particularly noticed in a subsequent Chapter.

Surrey." This is a remarkable proof of the high position which London had attained in this reign. Merlin then prophesies about a circumstance which illustrates the importance which the government so properly attached to the establishment of a standard measure of value—"The tokens of commerce shall be cut in sunder." On the reverse of the silver penny was a cross. But smaller coins than the penny were required; and thus, by once dividing the penny, by either of the lines of the cross, it became two halfpennies; and by twice so dividing, it became four farthings. The small coins, thus rudely produced, were often refused, and their value disputed. The currency was thus insufficient for the needful interchanges. "The halves shall be round," says the prophecy. It appears somewhat doubtful whether these round halfpennies and farthings were coined till the time of Edward I. But Eadmer, a contemporary, records that the halves and quarters were made round in the time of Henry.* We shall leave Merlin with one last quotation. "The rapacious kites shall perish, and the teeth of wolves be blunted." The despotism of Henry was most effectual in putting down the petty despots who had domineered over England; and to this salutary exercise of his power we may attribute much of the undoubted advance of the country during this reign of thirty-five years.

* See note in Lingard, vol. ii., p. 193, octavo edition.



The Vision of the Husbandmen.

Stephen
GEOFFREY
MATILDA

Great Seal of Stephen—Reverse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Arrival of Stephen—Temporary confusion—Adherents of Matilda—Castles—Scottish invasion—Battle of the Standard—Ecclesiastical power—Religious foundations since the Conquest—Cistercian Abbeys—Cathedrals—Norman bishops—Arrest of bishops—Synod—Landing of Matilda—Partisan war—Battle of Lincoln—Stephen a prisoner—Bishop of Winchester swears fealty to Matilda—Revolt of the Londoners—The rout of Winchester—Leaders of the war—Matilda's flight from Oxford—Turmoil and desolation—Henry of Anjou—Death of Stephen.

Of the reign of Stephen, Sir James Mackintosh has said, "It perhaps contains the most perfect condensation of all the ills of feudality to be found in history." He adds, "The whole narrative would have been rejected, as devoid of all likeness to truth, if it had been hazarded in fiction." * As a picture of "all the ills of feudality," this narrative is a picture of the entire social state—the monarchy, the church, the aristocracy, the people; and appears to us, therefore, to demand a more careful examination than if the historical interest were chiefly centred in the battles and adventures belonging to a disputed succession, and in the personal characters of a courageous princess and her knightly rival.

Stephen, earl of Boulogne, the nephew of King Henry I., was no stranger to the country which he aspired to rule. He had lived much in England, and was an universal favourite. "From his complacency of manners, and his readiness to joke, and sit and regale even with low people, he had gained so much on their affections as is hardly to be conceived." † This popular man was at the death-bed of his uncle; but before the royal body was borne on the shoulders of nobles from the castle of Lions to Rouen, Stephen was on his road to England. He embarked at Whitsand, undeterred by boisterous weather; and landed during a winter storm of thunder and lightning. It

* "History of England," in "Lardner's Cyclopædia."

† Malmesbury.

was a more evil omen when Dover and Canterbury shut their gates against him. But he went boldly on to London. There can be no doubt that his proceedings were not the result of a sudden impulse; and that his usurpation of the crown was successful, through a very powerful organisation. His brother Henry was bishop of Winchester; and his influence with the other dignitaries of the Church was mainly instrumental in the election of Stephen to be king, in open disregard of the oaths taken a few years before to recognise the succession of Matilda and of her son. Between the death of a king and the coronation of his successor, there was usually a short interval, in which the form of election was gone through. But it is held that during that suspension of the royal functions there was usually a proclamation of "the king's peace," under which all violations of law were punished as if the head of the law were in the full exercise of his functions and dignities.* King Henry I. died on the 1st of December, 1135. Stephen was crowned on the 26th of December. The death of Henry would probably have been generally known in England in a week after the event. There is a sufficient proof that this succession was considered doubtful, and, consequently, that there was an unusual delay in the proclamation of "the king's peace." The Forest Laws were the great grievance of Henry's reign. His death was the signal for their violation by the whole body of the people. "It was wonderful how so many myriads of wild animals, which in large herds before plentifully stocked the country, suddenly disappeared, so that out of the vast number scarcely two now could be found together. They seemed to be entirely extirpated." † According to the same authority, "the people also turned to plundering each other without mercy;" and "whatever the evil passions suggested in peaceable times, now that the opportunity of vengeance presented itself, was quickly executed." This is a remarkable condition of a country, which, having been governed by terror, suddenly passed out of the evils of despotism into the greater evils of anarchy. This temporary confusion must have contributed to urge on the election of Stephen. By the Londoners he was received with acclamations; and the witan chose him for king without hesitation, as one who could best fulfil the duties of the office, and put an end to the dangers of the kingdom.

Arms of Stephen.

Stephen succeeded to a vast amount of treasure. All the rents of Henry I. had been paid in money, instead of in necessaries; and he was rigid in enforcing the payment in coin of the best quality. With this possession of means, Stephen surrounded himself with troops from Flanders and Brittany. The objections to his want of hereditary right appear to have been altogether laid aside for a time, in the popularity which he derived from his personal qualities and his command of wealth. Strict hereditary claims to the choice of the nation had been disregarded since the

Silver Penny of Stephen. From Specimen in British Museum.

* See Hallam's "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 427, ed. 1855.

† "Acta Stephani," b. I., translated by Forester.

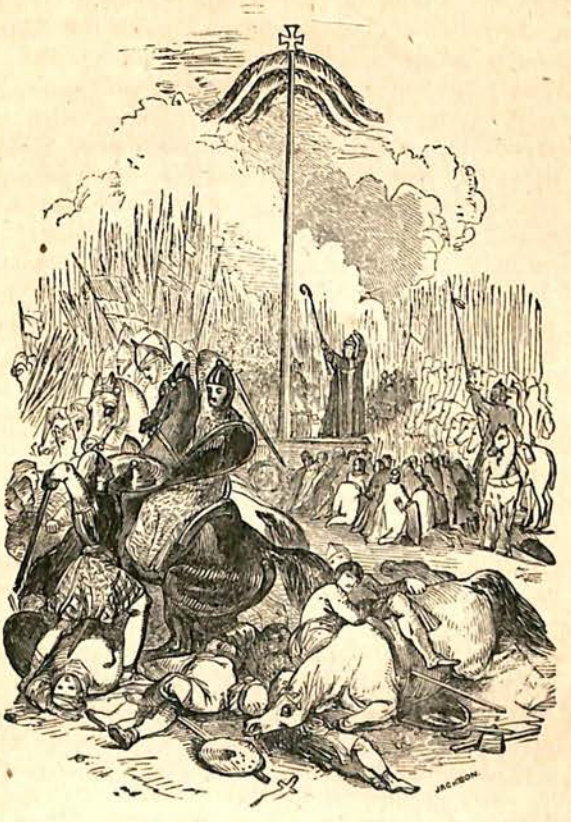
time of the Confessor. The oath to Matilda, it was maintained, had been unwillingly given, and even extorted by force. It is easy to conceive that, both to Saxon and Norman, the notion of a female sovereign would be out of harmony with their ancient traditions and their warlike habits. The king was the great military chief, as well as the supreme dispenser of justice and guardian of property. The time was far distant when the sovereign rule might be held to be most beneficially exercised by a wise choice of administrators, civil and military; and the power of the crown, being co-ordinate with other powers, strengthening as well as controlling its final authority, might be safely and happily exercised by a discreet, energetic, and just female. King Stephen vindicated the choice of the nation at the very outset of his reign. He went in person against the robbers who were ravaging the country. The daughter of "the lion of justice" would probably have done the same. But more than three hundred years had passed since the Lady of Mercia, the sister of Alfred, had asserted the courage of her race. Norman and Saxon wanted a king; for though ladies defended castles, and showed that firmness and bravery were not the exclusive possession of one sex, no thane or baron had yet knelt before a queen, and sworn to be her "liege man of life and limb."

The unanimity which appeared to hail the accession of Stephen was soon interrupted. David, king of Scotland, had advanced to Carlisle and Newcastle, to assert the claim of Matilda which he had sworn to uphold. But Stephen came against him with a great army, and for a time there was peace. Robert, earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry I., had done homage to Stephen; but his allegiance was very doubtful; and the general belief that he would renounce his fealty engendered secret hostility or open resistance amongst other powerful barons. Robert of Gloucester very soon defied the king's power. Within two years of his accession, the throne of Stephen was evidently becoming an insecure seat. To counteract the power of the great nobles, he made a lavish distribution of crown lands to a large number of tenants in chief. Some of them were called earls: but they had no official charge, as the greater barons had, but were mere titular lords, made by the royal bounty. All those who held direct from the crown were called barons; and these new barons, who were scattered over the country, had permission from the king to build castles. Such permission was extended to many other lay barons. The accustomed manor-house of the land-proprietor, in which he dwelt amidst the churls and serfs of his demesne, was now replaced by a stone tower, surrounded by a moat and a wall. The wooden one-storied homestead, with its thatched roof, shaded by the "toft" of ash and elm and maple, was pulled down, and a square fortress with loop-holes and battlement stood in solitary nakedness upon some bleak hill, ugly and defiant. There with a band of armed men—sometimes with a wife and children, and not unfrequently with an unhappy victim of his licentiousness,—the baron lived in gloom and gluttony, till the love of excitement, the approach of want, or the call to battle, drove him forth. His passion for hunting was not always free to be exercised. Venison was not everywhere to be obtained without danger even to the powerful and lawless. But within a ride of a few miles there was generally corn in the barns, and herds were in the pastures. The petty baron was almost invariably a robber—sometimes on his own account, often in some combined adventure of plunder. The spirit of rapine,

always too prevalent under the strongest government of those times, was now universal when the government was fighting for its own existence. Bands of marauders sallied forth from the great towns, especially from Bristol; and of their proceedings the author of the "Gesta Stephani" speaks with the precision of an eye-witness. The Bristolians, under the instigation of the earl of Gloucester, were partisans of the ex-empress Matilda; and wherever the king or his adherents had estates they came to seize their oxen and sheep, and carried men of substance into Bristol as captives, with bandaged eyes and bits in their mouths. From other towns as well as Bristol came forth plunderers, with humble gait, and courteous discourse; who when they met with a lonely man having the appearance of being wealthy, would bear him off to starvation and torture, till they had mulcted him to the last farthing. These and other indications of an unsettled government took place before the landing of Matilda, to assert her claims. An invasion of England by the Scottish king, without regard to the previous pacification, was made in 1138. But this attempt, although grounded upon the oath which David had sworn to Henry, was regarded by the Northumbrians as a national hostility which demanded a national resistance. The course of this invasion has been minutely described by contemporary chroniclers.

The author of the "Gesta Stephani" says—"Scotland, also called Albany, is a country overspread by extensive moors, but containing flourishing woods and pastures, which feed large herds of cows and oxen." Of the mountainous regions he says nothing. Describing the natives as savage, swift of foot, and lightly armed, he adds, "A confused multitude of this people being assembled from the lowlands of Scotland, they were formed into an irregular army, and marched for England." From the period of the Conquest, a large number of Anglo-Saxons had been settled in the lowlands; and the border countries of Westmoreland and Cumberland were also occupied, to a considerable extent, by the same race. The people of Galloway were chiefly of the original British stock. The historians describe "the confused multitude" as exercising great cruelties in their advance through the country that lies between the Tweed and the Tees; and Matthew Paris uses a significant phrase which marks how completely they spread over the land. He calls them the "Scottish Ants." The archbishop of York, Thurstan, an aged but vigorous man, collected a large army to resist the invaders; and he made a politic appeal to the old English nationality, by calling out the population under the banners of their Saxon saints. The bishop of Durham was the leader of this army, composed of the Norman chivalry, and the English archers. The opposing forces met at Northallerton, on the 22nd of August, 1138. The Anglo-Norman army was gathered round a tall cross, raised on a car, and surrounded by the banners of Saint Cuthbert, and Saint Wilfred, and Saint John of Beverley. From this incident the bloody day of Northallerton was called "The Battle of the Standard." Hoveden has given an oration made by Ralph, bishop of Durham, in which he addresses the captains as "Brave nobles of England, Normans by birth;" and, pointing to the enemy who knew not the use of armour, exclaims, "Your head is covered with the helmet, your breast with a coat of mail, your legs with greaves, and your whole body with the shield." Of the Saxon yeomanry he says nothing. Whether the oration be genuine or not, it exhibits the mode in which the

mass of the people were regarded at that time. Thierry appears to consider that the bold attempt of David of Scotland was made in reliance upon the support of the Anglo-Saxon race. But it is perfectly clear that they bore



the brunt of the English battle; and, whatever might be their wrongs, were not disposed to yield their fields and houses to a fierce multitude who came for spoil and for possession. The Scotch fought with darts and long spears, and attacked the solid mass of Normans and English, gathered round the standard. Prince Henry, the son of the king of Scotland, made a vigorous onslaught with a body of horse, composed of English and Normans attached to his father's household. These were, without doubt, especial partisans of the claim to the English crown of the ex-empress Matilda; and, as the king of Scotland himself is described, were "inflamed with zeal for a just cause." * The issue of the battle was the signal defeat of the Scottish army, with the loss of eleven thousand men upon the field. A peace was concluded with King Stephen in the following year.

* Scott has given a picturesque account of the battle in his "Tales of a Grandfather." Writing, as he often did, from general impressions, in describing the gallant charge of Prince Henry, he states that he broke the English line "as if it had been a spider's web." Hoveden, the historian to whom Scott alludes, applies this strong image to the scattering of the men of Lothian. "For the Almighty was offended at them, and their strength was rent like a cobweb."

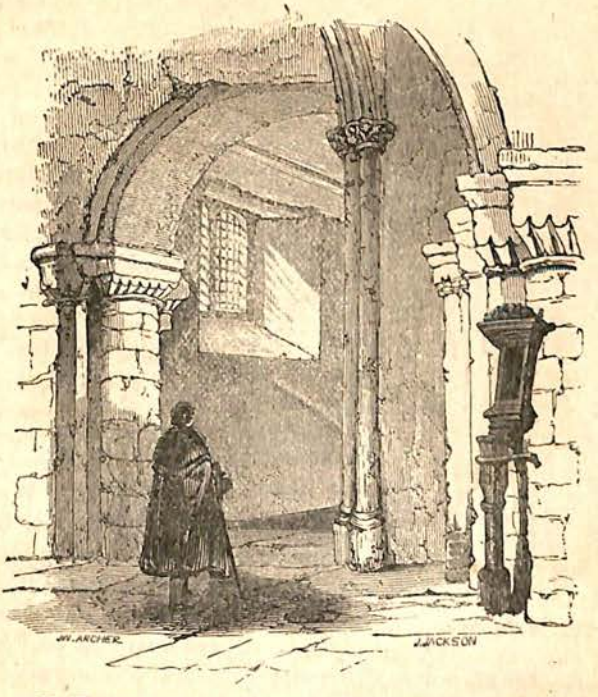
The issue of the battle of the Standard might have given rest to England, if Stephen had understood the spirit of his age. In 1139, he engaged in a contest more full of peril than the assaults of Scotland, or the disturbances of

Norman Gateway, Dover Castle

Wales. He had been successful against some of the disaffected barons. He had besieged and taken Hereford Castle and Shrewsbury Castle. Dover Castle had surrendered to his queen. Robert, earl of Gloucester, kept possession of the castles of Bristol and Leeds; and other nobles held out against him in various strong places. London and some of the larger towns appear to have steadily clung to his government. The influence of the Church, by which he had been chiefly raised to sovereignty, had supported him during his four years of struggle. But that influence was now to be shaken.

The rapid and steady growth of the ecclesiastical power in England, from the period of the Conquest, is one of the most remarkable characteristics of that age. This progress we must steadily keep in view, if we would rightly understand the general condition of society. All the great offices of the Church, with scarcely an exception, were filled by Normans. The Conqueror sternly resisted any attempts of bishops or abbots to control his civil government. The Red King misappropriated their revenues in many cases. Henry I. quarrelled with Anselm about the right of investiture, which the Pope declared should not be in the hands of any layman; but Henry compromised a difficult question with his usual prudence. Whatever difficulties the Church encountered, during seventy years, and especially during the whole course of Henry's reign, wealth flowed in upon the ecclesiastics, from king and noble, from burgess and socman; and every improvement of the country increased the value of Church possessions. It was not only from the lands of the crown, and the manors of earls, that bishoprics and monasteries derived their large endowments. Henry I. founded the Abbey of Reading, but the "mimus" of Henry I. built the priory and hospital of Saint Bartholomew. This "pleasant-witted gentleman," as Stow calls the royal "mimus" (which

Percy interprets "minstrel"), having, according to the legend, "diverted the palaces of princes with courtly mockeries and triflings" for many years, bethought himself at last of more serious matters, and went to do penance at

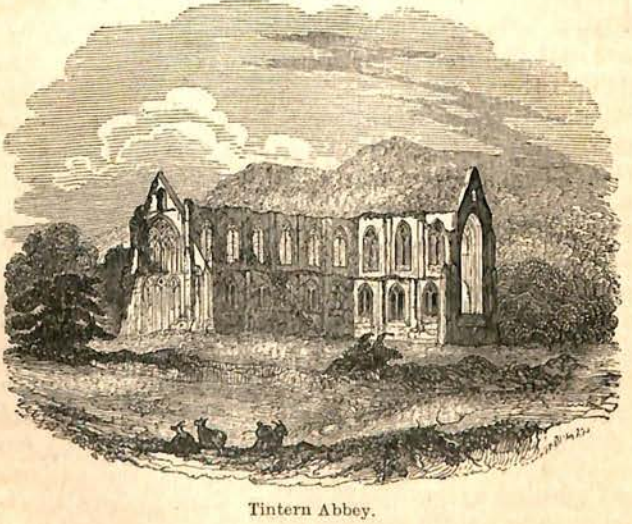


The Western Entrance, Interior, St. Bartholomew's Church.

Rome. He returned to London; and obtaining a grant of land in a part of the king's market of Smithfield, which was a filthy marsh where the common gallows stood, there erected the priory, whose Norman arches as satisfactorily attest its date as Henry's charter. The piety of a court jester in the twelfth century, when the science of medicine was wholly empirical, founded one of the most valuable medical schools of the nineteenth century. The desire to raise up splendid churches, in the place of the dilapidated Saxon buildings, was a passion with Normans, whether clerks or laymen. Ralph Flambard, the bold and unscrupulous minister of William II. erected the great priory of Christchurch, in his capacity of bishop. But he raised the necessary funds with his usual financial vigour. He took the revenues of the canons into his hands, and put the canons upon a short allowance till the work was completed. The Cistercian order of monks was established in England late in the reign of Henry I. Their rule was one of the most severe mortification and of the strictest discipline. Their lives were spent in labour and in prayer, and their one frugal daily meal was eaten in silence. Whilst other religious orders had their splendid abbeys amidst large communities, the Cistercians humbly asked grants of land in the most solitary places, where the recluse could meditate without interruption by his fellow-men, amidst desolate moors and in the uncultivated gorges of inaccessible mountains. In such a barren district, Walter L'Espée, who had fought at Northallerton, founded Rievaulx

Abbey. It was "a solitary place in Blakemore," in the midst of hills. The Norman knight had lost his son; and here he derived a holy comfort in seeing the monastic buildings rise under his munificent care, and the waste lands become fertile under the incessant labours of the devoted monks. The ruins of Tintern Abbey, and Melrose Abbey, whose solemn influences have inspired the poets of our own age with thoughts akin to the contemplations of their Cistercian founders, belong to a later period of ecclesiastical architecture; for the dwellings of the original monks have perished, and the "broken arches," and "shafted oriel," the "imagery," and "the scrolls that teach thee to live and die," speak of another century, when the Norman architecture, like the Norman character, was losing its distinctive features, and becoming "Early English." We dwell a little upon these Norman foundations, to show how completely the Church was spreading itself over the land, and asserting its influence in places where man had seldom trod, as well as in populous towns, where the great cathedral was crowded with earnest votaries, and the lessons of peace were proclaimed amidst the distractions of

A Cistercian.



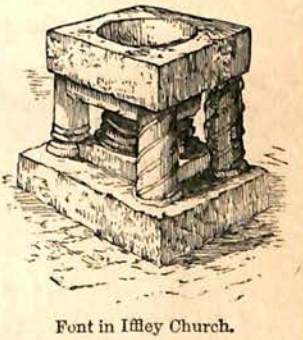
Tintern Abbey.

unsettled government, and the oppressions of lordly despotism. Whatever was the misery of the country, the ordinary family ties still bound the people to the

universal Christian Church, whether the priest were Norman or English. The new-born infant was dipped in the great Norman font, as the children of the Confessor's time had been dipped in the ruder Saxon. The same Latin

Melrose Abbey.

office, unintelligible in words but significant in its import, was said and sung when the bride stood at the altar, and the father was laid in his grave. The vernacular tongue gradually melted into one dialect; and the penitent and the confessor were the first to lay aside the great distinction of race and country—that of language.



Font in Iffley Church.

The Norman prelates were men of learning and ability, of taste and magnificence; and, whatever might have been the luxury and even vices of some amongst them, the vast revenues of the great sees were not wholly devoted to worldly pomp, but were applied to noble uses. After the lapse of seven centuries we still tread with reverence those portions of our cathedrals in which the early Norman architecture is manifest. There is no English cathedral in which we are so completely impressed with the massive grandeur of the round-arched style, as by Durham. The lines of Congreve, which Johnson thought the finest piece of description in our language, especially apply to such architecture:—

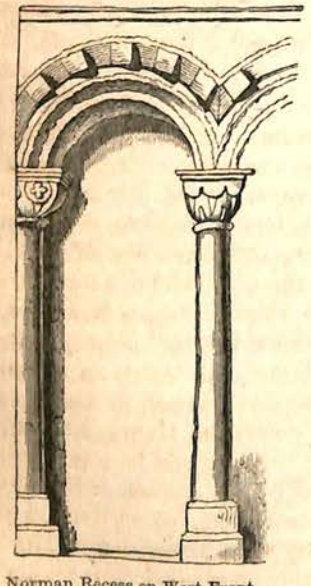
> "How reverend is the face of this tall pile;
> Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads
> To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,
> By its own weight made stedfast and immoveable,
> Looking tranquillity."

Durham Cathedral was commenced in the middle of the reign of Rufus, and the building went on through the reign of Henry I. Canterbury was commenced by Archbishop Lanfranc, soon after the Conquest, and was enlarged and altered in various details, till it was burnt in 1174. Some portions of the

original building remain. Rochester was commenced eleven years after the Conquest; and its present nave is an unaltered part of the original building. Chichester has nearly the same date of its commencement; and the building of

Durham Cathedral.

this church was continued till its dedication in 1148. Norwich was founded in 1094, and its erection was carried forward so rapidly, that in seven years there were sixty monks here located. Winchester is one of the earliest of



Norman Recess on West Front, Rochester.

Figure over the Entrance to the Transept, Norwich.

these noble cathedrals; but its Norman feature of the round arch is not the general characteristic of the edifice, the original piers having been re-cased in the pointed style, in the reign of Edward III. The dates of these buildings,

so grand in their conception, so solid in their execution, would be sufficient of themselves to show the wealth and activity of the Church during the reigns of the Conqueror and his sons. But, during this period of seventy years, and in part of the reign of Stephen, the erection of monastic buildings was universal in England, as in continental Europe. The Crusades gave a most powerful impulse to the religious fervour. In the enthusiasm of chivalry, which covered many of its enormities with outward acts of piety, vows were frequently made by wealthy nobles that they would depart for the Holy Wars. But sometimes the vow was inconvenient. The lady of the castle wept at the almost certain perils of her lord; and his projects of ambition often kept the lord at home to look after his own especial interests. Then the vow to wear the cross might be commuted by the foundation of a religious house. Death-bed repentance for crimes of violence and a licentious life increased the number of these endowments. It has been computed that three hundred monastic establishments were founded in England during the reigns of Henry I., Stephen, and Henry II.*

We have briefly stated these few general facts regarding the outward manifestation of the power and the wealth of the Church at this period, to show how important an influence it must have exercised upon all questions of government. But its organisation was of far greater importance than the aggregate wealth of the sees and abbeys. The English Church, during the troubled reign of Stephen, had become more completely under the papal dominion than at any previous period of its history. The king attempted, rashly perhaps, but honestly, to interpose some check to the ecclesiastical desire for supremacy; but from the hour when he entered into a contest with bishops and synods, his reign became one of kingly trouble and national misery.

The Norman bishops not only combined in their own persons the functions of the priest and of the lawyer, but were often military leaders. As barons they had knight-service to perform; and this condition of their tenures naturally surrounded them with armed retainers. That this anomalous position should have corrupted the ambitious churchman into a proud and luxurious lord was almost inevitable. The authority of the crown might have been strong enough to repress the individual discontent, or to punish the individual treason, of these great prelates; but every one of them was doubly formidable as a member of a confederacy over which a foreign head claimed to preside. There were three bishops whose intrigues King Stephen had especially to dread, at the time when an open war for the succession of Matilda was on the point of bursting forth. Roger, the bishop of Salisbury, had been promoted from the condition of a parish priest at Caen, to be chaplain, secretary, chancellor, and chief justiciary of Henry I. He was instrumental in the election of Stephen to the throne; and he was rewarded with extravagant gifts, as he had been previously rewarded by Henry. Stephen appears to have fostered his rapacity, in the conviction that his pride would have a speedier fall; the king often saying, "I would give him half England, if he asked for it: till the time be ripe, he shall tire of asking, ere I tire of giving." † The time was ripe in 1139. The bishop had erected castles at Devizes, at Sherborne, and at Malmesbury. King Henry had

* Lyttelton's "Henry II.," vol. iii., p. 294, ed. 1769.
† Malmesbury, Book II. of "Modern History."

given him the castle of Salisbury. This lord of four castles had powerful auxiliaries in his nephews, the bishop of Lincoln, and the bishop of Ely. Alexander of Lincoln had built the castles of Newark and Sleaford, and was almost as powerful as his uncle. In July, 1139, a great council was held at Oxford; and thither came these three bishops with military and secular pomp, and with an escort that became "the wonder of all beholders." A quarrel ensued between the retainers of the bishops and those of Alain, Earl of Brittany, about a right to quarters; and the quarrel went on to a battle, in which men were slain on both sides. The bishops of Salisbury and Lincoln were arrested, as breakers of the king's peace. The bishop of Ely fled to his uncle's castle of Devizes. The king, under the advice of the sagacious Earl Millent, resolved to dispossess these dangerous prelates of their fortresses, which were all finally surrendered. "The bishops, humbled and mortified, and stripped of all pomp and vain-glory, were reduced to a simple ecclesiastical life, and to the possessions belonging to them as churchmen." The contemporary who writes this,—the author of the "Gesta Stephani,"—although a decided partisan of Stephen, speaks of this event as the result of mad counsels, and a grievous sin that resembled the wickedness of the sons of Korah and of Saul. The great body of the ecclesiastics were indignant at what they considered an offence to their order. The bishop of Winchester, the brother of Stephen, had become the pope's legate in England; and he summoned the king to attend a synod at Winchester. He there produced his authority as legate from Pope Innocent, and denounced the arrest of the bishops as a dreadful crime. The king had refused to attend the council, but he sent Alberic de Vere, "a man deeply versed in legal affairs," to represent him. This advocate urged that the bishop of Lincoln was the author of the tumult at Oxford; that whenever Bishop Roger came to court, his people, presuming on his power, excited tumults; that the bishop secretly favoured the king's enemies, and was ready to join the party of the empress. The council was adjourned; but on a subsequent day came the archbishop of Rouen, as the champion of the king, and contended that it was against the canons that the bishops should possess castles; and that even if they had the right, they were bound to deliver them up to the will of the king, as the times were eventful, and the king was bound to make war for the common security. The archbishop of Rouen reasoned as a statesman; the bishop of Winchester as the pope's legate. Some of the bishops threatened to proceed to Rome; and the king's advocate intimated that if they did so, their return might not be so easy. Swords were at last unsheathed. The king and the earls were now in open hostility with the legate and the bishops. Excommunication of the king was hinted at; but persuasion was resorted to. Stephen, according to one authority, made humble submission, and thus "abated the rigour of ecclesiastical discipline." * If he did submit, his submission was too late. Within a month Earl Robert and the Empress Matilda were in England.

Matilda and the earl of Gloucester landed at Arundel, where the widow of Henry I. was dwelling. They had a very small force to support their pretensions. The earl crossed the country to Bristol. "All England was struck with alarm, and men's minds were agitated in various ways. Those

* Gesta Stephani.

who secretly or openly favoured the invaders were roused to more than usual activity against the king, while his own partisans were terrified as if a thunder-bolt had fallen." * Stephen invested the castle of Arundel. But in the most romantic spirit of chivalry he permitted the empress to pass out, and to set forward to join her brother at Bristol, under a safe conduct. In 1140 the whole kingdom appears to have been subjected to the horrors of a partisan warfare. The barons in their castles were making a show of "defending their neighbourhoods, but, more properly to speak, were laying them waste." The legate and the bishops were excommunicating the plunderers of churches, but the plunderers laughed at their anathemas. Freebooters came over from Flanders, not to practise the industrial arts as in the time of Henry I., but to take their part in the general pillage. There was frightful scarcity in the country, and the ordinary interchange of man with man was unsettled by the debasement of the coin. "All things," says Malmesbury, "became venal in England; and churches and abbeys were no longer secretly but even publicly exposed to sale." All things become venal, under a government too weak to repress plunder or to punish corruption. The strong aim to be rich by rapine, and the cunning by fraud, when the confusion of a kingdom is grown so great that, as is recorded of this period, "the neighbour could put no faith in his nearest neighbour, nor the friend in his friend, nor the brother in his own brother." The demoralisation of anarchy is even more terrible than its bloodshed.

The marches and sieges, the revolts and treacheries of this evil time, are occasionally varied by incidents which illustrate the state of society. Robert Fitz-Herbert, with a detachment of the earl of Gloucester's soldiers, surprised the castle of Devizes, which the king had taken from the bishop of Salisbury. Robert Fitz-Herbert varies the atrocities of his fellow-barons, by rubbing his prisoners with honey, and exposing them naked to the sun. But Robert, having obtained Devizes, refused to admit the earl of Gloucester to any advantage of its possession, and commenced the subjection of the neighbourhood on his own account. Another crafty baron, John Fitz-Gilbert, held the castle of Marlborough; and Robert Fitz-Herbert, having an anxious desire to be lord of that castle also, endeavouring to cajole Fitz-Gilbert into the admission of his followers, went there as a guest but was detained as a prisoner. Upon this the earl of Gloucester came in force for revenge against his treacherous ally, Fitz-Herbert, and conducting him to Devizes there hanged him. The surprise of Lincoln Castle, upon which the events of 1141 mainly turned, is equally characteristic of the age. Ranulf, earl of Chester, and William de Roumare, his half brother, were avowed friends of King Stephen. But their ambition took a new direction for the support of Matilda. The garrison of Lincoln had no apprehension of a surprise, and were busy in those sports which hardy men enjoy even amidst the rougher sport of war. The countess of Chester and her sister-in-law, with a politeness that the ladies of the court of Louis-le-Grand could not excel, paid a visit to the wife of the knight who had the defence of the castle. While there, at this pleasant morning call, "talking and joking" with the unsuspecting matron, as Ordericus relates, the earl of Chester came in, "without his armour or even his mantle," attended only by three soldiers. His courtesy was as flattering as that of his

* Malmesbury.

countess and her friend. But his men-at-arms suddenly mastered the unprepared guards, and the gates were thrown open to Earl William and his numerous followers. The earls, after this stratagem, held the castle against the king, who speedily marched to Lincoln. But the earl of Chester contrived to leave the castle, and soon raised a powerful army of his own vassals The earl of Gloucester joined him with a considerable force, and they together advanced to the relief of the besieged city. The battle of Lincoln was preceded by a trifling incident to which the chroniclers have attached importance. It was the feast of the Purification; and at the mass which was celebrated at the dawn of day, when the king was holding a lighted taper in his hand it was suddenly extinguished. "This was an omen of sorrow to the king," says Hoveden. But another chronicler, the author of the "Gesta Stephani," tells us in addition, that the wax-candle was as suddenly relighted; and he accordingly argues that this incident was "a token that for his sins he should be deprived of his crown, but on his repentance, through God's mercy, he should wonderfully and gloriously recover it." The king had been more than a month laying siege to the castle, and his army was encamped around the city of Lincoln. When it was ascertained that his enemies were at hand he was advised to raise the siege, and march out to strengthen his power by a general levy. He decided upon instant battle. He was then exhorted not to fight on the solemn festival of the Purification. But his courage was greater than his prudence or his piety. He set forth to meet the insurgent earls. The best knights were in his army; but the infantry of his rivals was far more numerous. Stephen detached a strong body of horse and foot to dispute the passage of a ford of the Trent. But Gloucester by an impetuous charge obtained possession of the ford, and the battle became general.* The king's horsemen fled. The desperate bravery of Stephen, and the issue of the battle, have been described by Henry of Huntingdon with singular animation:—"King Stephen, therefore, with his infantry, stood alone in the midst of the enemy. These surrounded the royal troops, attacking the columns on all sides, as if they were assaulting a castle. Then the battle raged terribly round this circle; helmets and swords gleamed as they clashed, and the fearful cries and shouts re-echoed from the neighbouring hills and city walls. The cavalry, furiously charging the royal column, slew some and trampled down others; some were made prisoners. No respite, no breathing time, was allowed; except in the quarter in which the king himself had taken his stand, where the assailants recoiled from the unmatched force of his terrible arm. The earl of Chester seeing this, and envious of the glory the king was gaining, threw himself upon him with the whole weight of his men-at-arms. Even then the king's courage did not fail, but his heavy battle-axe gleamed like lightning, striking down some, bearing back others. At length it was shattered by repeated blows. Then he drew his well-tried sword, with which he wrought wonders, until that, too, was broken. Perceiving which, William de Kaims, a brave soldier, rushed on him, and seizing him by his helmet, shouted, 'Here, here, I have taken the king!' Others came to his aid, and the king was made prisoner."†

* Malmesbury's statement that the earl and his followers swam across the rapid Trent, swollen by rains, seems apocryphal.

† These incidents have been dramatised by Keats, in a spirited fragment, printed in Mr. Monckton Milnes' "Life of Keats."

After the capture of king Stephen, at this brief but decisive battle, he was kept a close prisoner at Bristol Castle. Then commenced what might be called the reign of queen Matilda, which lasted about eight months. The defeat of Stephen was the triumph of the greater ecclesiastics. On the third Sunday in Lent, 1141, there was a conference on the plain in the neighbourhood of Winchester,—a day dark and rainy, which portended disasters The bishop of Winchester came forth from his city, with all the pomp of the Pope's legate; and there Matilda swore that in all matters of importance, and especially in the bestowal of bishoprics and abbeys, she would submit to the Church; and the bishop and his supporters pledged their faith to the empress on these conditions. After Easter, a great council was held at Winchester, which the bishop called as the Pope's vicegerent. The unscrupulous churchman boldly came forward, and denounced his brother, inviting the assembly to elect a sovereign; and, with an amount of arrogance totally unprecedented, thus asserted the notorious untruth that the right of electing a king of England principally belonged to the clergy: "The case was yesterday agitated before a part of the higher clergy of England, to whose right it principally pertains to elect the sovereign, and also to crown him. First, then, as is fitting, invoking God's assistance, we elect the daughter of that peaceful, that glorious, that rich, that good, and in our times incomparable king, as sovereign of England and Normandy, and promise her fidelity and support." * The bishop then said to the applauding assembly, "We have despatched messengers for the Londoners, who, from the importance of their city in England are almost nobles, as it were, to meet us on this business." The next day the Londoners came. They were sent, they said, by their fraternity to entreat that their lord, the king, might be liberated from captivity. The legate refused them, and repeated his oration against his brother. It was a work of great difficulty to soothe the minds of the Londoners; and Saint John's day had arrived before they would consent to acknowledge Matilda. Many parts of the kingdom had then submitted to her government; and she entered London with great state. Her nature seems to have been rash and imperious. Her first act was to demand subsidies of the citizens; and when they said that their wealth was greatly diminished by the troubled state of the kingdom, she broke forth into insufferable rage. The vigilant queen of Stephen, who kept possession of Kent, now approached the city with a numerous force; and by her envoys demanded her husband's freedom. Of course her demand was made in vain. She then put forth a front of battle. Instead of being crowned at Westminster the daughter of Henry I. fled in terror; for "the whole city flew to arms at the ringing of the bells, which was the signal for war, and all with one accord rose upon the countess [of Anjou] and her adherents, as swarms of wasps issue from their hives." †

William Fitzstephen, the biographer of Thomas-à-Becket, in his "Description of London," supposed to be written about the middle of the reign of Henry II., says of this city, "ennobled by her men, graced by her arms

* "Ventilata est causa, coram majori parte cleri Angliæ, ad cujus jus potissimùm spectat principem eligere, simulque ordinare."—Malmesbury (who appears to have been present at this Council), "Modern History," book iii.

† Acta Stephani.

and peopled by a multitude of inhabitants," that "in the wars under King Stephen there went out to a muster of armed horsemen, esteemed fit for war, twenty thousand, and of infantry, sixty thousand." In general, the "Description of London" appears trustworthy, and in some instances is supported by other authorities. But this vast number of fighting men must, unquestionably, be exaggerated: unless, as Lyttelton conjectures, such a muster included the militia of Middlesex, Kent, and other counties adjacent to London.* Peter of Blois, in the reign of Henry II., reckons the inhabitants of the city at forty thousand. That the citizens were trained to warlike exercises, and that their manly sports nurtured them in the hardihood of military habits, we may well conclude from Fitzstephen's account of this community at a little later period than that of which we are writing. To the north of the city were pasture lands, with streams on whose banks the clack of many mills was pleasing to the ear; and beyond was an immense forest, with densely wooded thickets, where stags, fallow-deer, boars, and wild bulls had their coverts. We have seen that in the Charter of Henry I., the citizens had liberty to hunt through a very extensive district, and hawking was also amongst their free recreations. Foot-ball was the favourite game; and the boys of the schools, and the various guilds of craftmen, had each their ball. The elder citizens came on horseback to see these contests of the young men. Every Sunday in Lent, a company with lances and shields went out to joust. In the Easter holidays they had river tournaments. During the summer the youths exercised themselves in leaping, archery, wrestling, stone-throwing, slinging javelins, and fighting with bucklers. When the great marsh which washed the walls of the city on the north was frozen over, sliding, sledging, and skating were the sports of crowds. They had sham fights on the ice, and legs and arms were sometimes broken. "But," says Fitzstephen, "youth is an age eager for glory and desirous of victory, and so young men engage in counterfeit battles, that they may conduct themselves more valiantly in real ones." That universal love of hardy sports, which is one of the greatest characteristics of England, and from which we derive no little of that spirit which keeps our island safe, is not of modern growth. It was one of the most important portions of the education of the people seven centuries ago.

Water-Tournament.

It was this community, then, so brave, so energetic, so enriched by commerce above all the other cities of England, that resolutely abided by the fortunes of King Stephen. They had little to dread from any hostile assaults of the rival faction; for the city was strongly fortified on all sides except tc the river; but on that side it was secure, after the Tower was built. The

* Life of Henry II., vol. iii. p. 275.

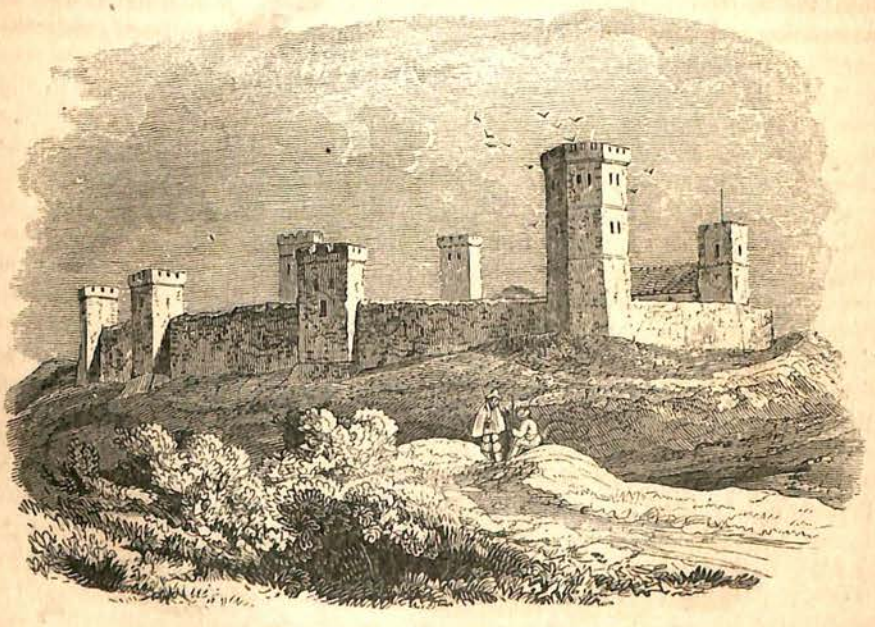
palace of Westminster had also a breastwork and bastions. After Matilda had taken her hasty departure, the indignant Londoners marched out, and they sustained a principal part in what has been called "the rout of Winchester," in which Robert, earl of Gloucester, was taken prisoner. The ex-empress escaped to Devizes. The capture of the earl of Gloucester led to important results. A convention was agreed to between the adherents of each party that the king should be exchanged for the earl. Stephen was once more "every inch a king." But still there was no peace in the land.

The bishop of Winchester had again changed his side. In the hour of success the empress Matilda had refused the reasonable request that Prince Eustace, the son of Stephen, should be put in possession of his father's earldom of Boulogne. Malmesbury says, "A misunderstanding arose between the legate and the empress which may be justly considered as the melancholy cause of every subsequent evil in England." The chief actors in this extraordinary drama present a curious study of human character. Matilda, resting her claim to the throne upon her legitimate descent from Henry I., who had himself usurped the throne,—possessing her father's courage and daring, with some of his cruelty,—haughty, vindictive,—furnishes one of the most striking portraits of the proud lady of the feudal period, who shrank from no danger by reason of her sex, but made the homage of chivalry to woman a powerful instrument for enforcing her absolute will. The earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate brother of Matilda, brave, steadfast, of a free and generous nature, a sagacious counsellor, a lover of literature, appears to have had few of the vices of that age, and most of its elevating qualities. Of Stephen it has been said, "He deserves no other reproach than that of having embraced the occupation of a captain of banditti." This appears rather a harsh judgment from a philosophical writer.* Bearing in mind that the principle of election prevailed in the choice of a king, whatever was the hereditary claim, and seeing how welcome was the advent of Stephen when he came, in 1135, to avert the dangers of the kingdom, he merits the title of "a captain of banditti" no more than Harold, or William the Conqueror. After the contests of six years—the victories, the defeats, the hostility of the Church, his capture and imprisonment—the attachment of the people of the great towns to his person and government appears to have been unshaken. When he was defeated at Lincoln, and led captive through the city, "the surrounding multitude were moved with pity, shedding tears, and uttering cries of grief." † Ordericus says, "The king's disaster filled with grief the clergy and monks and the common people; because he was condescending and courteous to those who were good and quiet; and if his treacherous nobles had allowed it, he would have put an end to their rapacious enterprises, and been a generous protector and benevolent friend of the country." The fourth, and not least remarkable personage of this history, is Henry, the Bishop of Winchester, and the Pope's legate. At that period, when the functions of churchman and statesman were united, we find this man the chief instrument for securing the crown for his brother. He subsequently becomes the viceregent of the Papal See. Stephen, with more justice than discretion, is of opinion that bishops are not doing their duty when they build castles, ride about in armour with crowds of retainers, and are not at all scrupulous in appropriating some of the booty of

* Sir James Mackintosh. † Acta Stephani.

a lawless time. From the day when he exhibited his hostility to fighting bishops, the Pope's legate was his brother's deadly enemy. But he found that the rival whom he had set up was by no means a pliant tool in his hands, and he then turned against Matilda. When Stephen had shaken off the chains with which he was loaded in Bristol Castle, the bishop summoned a council at Westminster, on his legatine authority; and there "by great powers of eloquence, endeavoured to extenuate the odium of his own conduct;" affirming that he had supported the empress, "not from inclination but necessity." He then "commanded on the part of God and of the Pope, that they should strenuously assist the king, appointed by the will of the people, and by the approbation of the Holy See." Malmesbury, who records these doings, adds that a layman sent from the empress affirmed that "her coming to England had been effected by the legate's frequent letters;" and that "her taking the king, and holding him in captivity, had been done principally by his connivance." The reign of Stephen is not only "the most perfect condensation of all the ills of feudality," but affords a striking picture of the ills which befall a people when an ambitious hierarchy, swayed to and fro at the will of a foreign power, regards the supremacy of the Church as the one great object to be attained, at whatever expense of treachery and falsehood, of national degradation and general suffering.

In 1142 the civil war is raging more fiercely than ever. Matilda is at Oxford, a fortified city, protected by the Thames, by a wall, and by an impregnable castle. Stephen, with a body of veterans, wades across the river, and



Oxford Castle. From an ancient print.

enters the city. Matilda and her followers take refuge in the keep. For three months the king presses the siege, surrounding the fortress on all sides.

Famine is approaching to the helpless garrison. It is the Christmas season. The country is covered with a deep snow. The Thames and the tributary rivers are frozen over. With a small escort Matilda contrives to escape, and passes undiscovered through the royal posts, on a dark and silent night, when no sound is heard but the clang of a trumpet or the challenge of a sentinel. In the course of the night she went to Abingdon on foot, and afterwards reached Wallingford on horseback. The author of the "Gesta Stephani" expresses his wonder at the marvellous escapes of this courageous woman. The changes of her fortune are equally remarkable. After the flight from Oxford the arms of the Earl of Gloucester are again successful. Stephen is beaten at Wilton, and retreats precipitately with his military brother, the Bishop of Winchester. There is now in the autumn of 1142 universal turmoil and desolation. Many people emigrate. Others crowd round the sanctuary of the churches, and dwell there in mean hovels. Famine is general. Fields are white with ripened corn, but the cultivators have fled, and there are none to gather the harvest. Cities are deserted and depopulated. Fierce foreign mercenaries, for whom the barons have no pay, pillage the farms and the monasteries. The bishops, for the most part, rest supine amidst all this storm of tyranny. When they rouse themselves they increase rather than mitigate the miseries of the people. Milo, Earl of Hereford, has demanded money of the Bishop of Hereford to pay his troops. The bishop refuses, and Milo seizes his lands and goods. The bishop then pronounces sentence of excommunication against Milo and his adherents, and lays an interdict upon the whole country subject to the earl's authority. We might hastily think that the solemn curse pronounced against a nation, or a district, was an unmeaning ceremony, with its "bell, book, and candle" to terrify only the

weak-minded. It was one of the most outrageous of the numerous ecclesiastical tyrannies. The consolations of religion were eagerly sought for and justly prized by the great body of the people, who earnestly believed that a

happy future would be a reward for the patient endurance of a miserable present. As they were admitted to the Holy Communion, they recognised an acknowledgment of the equality of men before the great Father of all. Their marriages were blessed and their funerals were hallowed. Under an interdict all the churches were shut. No knell was tolled for the dead; for the dead remained unburied. No merry peals welcomed the bridal procession; for no couple could be joined in wedlock. The awe-stricken mother might have her infant baptised, and the dying might receive extreme unction. But all public offices of the Church were suspended. If we imagine such a condition of society in a village devastated by fire and sword, we may wonder how a free government and a Christian church have ever grown up amongst us.

If Stephen had quietly possessed the throne, and his heir had succeeded him, the crowns of England and Normandy would have been disconnected before the thirteenth century. Geoffrey of Anjou, whilst his duchess was in England, had become master of Normandy, and its nobles had acknowledged his son Henry as their rightful duke. The boy was in England, under the protection of the Earl of Gloucester, who attended to his education. The great earl died in 1147. For a few years there had been no decided contest between the forces of the king and the empress. After eight years of terrible hostility, and of desperate adventure, Matilda left the country. Stephen made many efforts to control the licence of the barons, but with little effect. He was now engaged in another quarrel with the Church. His brother had been superseded as legate by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, in consequence of the death of the Pope who had supported the Bishop of Winchester. Theobald was Stephen's enemy, and his hostility was rendered formidable by his alliance with Bigod, the Earl of Norfolk. The archbishop excommunicated Stephen and his adherents, and the king was enforced to submission. In 1150, Stephen having been again reconciled to the Church, sought the recognition of his son Eustace as the heir to the kingdom. This recognition was absolutely refused by the archbishop, who said that Stephen was regarded by the papal see as an usurper. But time was preparing a solution of the difficulties of the kingdom. Henry of Anjou was grown into manhood. Born in 1133, he had been knighted by his uncle, David of Scotland, in 1149. His father died in 1151, and he became not only Duke of Normandy, but Earl of Anjou, Touraine, and Maine. In 1152, he contracted a marriage of ambition with Eleanor, the divorced wife of Louis of France, and thus became Lord of Aquitaine and Poitou, which Eleanor possessed in her own right. Master of all the western coast of France, from the Somme to the Pyrenees, with the exception of Brittany, his ambition, thus strengthened by his power, prepared to dispute the sovereignty of England with better hopes than ever waited on his mother's career. He landed with a well-appointed band of followers in 1153, and besieged various castles. But no general encounter took place. The king and the duke had a conference, without witnesses, across a rivulet, and this meeting prepared the way for a final pacification. The negotiators were Henry, the bishop, on the one part, and Theobald, the archbishop, on the other. Finally, Stephen led the prince in solemn procession through the streets of Winchester, "and all the great men of the realm, by the king's command, did homage, and pronounced the fealty due to

their liege lord, to the Duke of Normandy, saving only their allegiance to King Stephen during his life." * Stephen's son Eustace had died during the negotiations. The troublesome reign of Stephen was soon after brought to a close. He died on the 25th October, 1154. His constant and heroic queen had died three years before him.

* Henry of Huntingdon.

Tegulated Armour of a Baron in the time of Stephen
Seal of Richard, Constable of Chester.

Great Seal of Henry II.

CHAPTER XIX.

Henry II. crowned—Establishment of order—Parentage of Becket—Becket chancellor—Character of Henry—Becket ambassador to France—Malcolm of Scotland—Invasion of Wales—Description of the Welsh—Wars on the Continent—Becket archbishop of Canterbury—Character of Becket.

AFTER the long troubles of the reign of Stephen, it was not without hope of a quiet future that the people of England saw a young man enter upon the kingly office with an undisputed title. In those days when history, for the great mass of the community, was little more than imperfect tradition, it would still be handed down to the Anglo-Saxon people that for nearly two hundred years, since the days of King Ethelred, the succession to the throne had been ever doubtful. The Danish power had snatched the crown from the race of Alfred for a third of a century. It was restored to the ancient line for a short period ; and then came another conquest, which had extinguished all chance of any other than a foreign rule, till time should confound the distinctions of birth and language. But of three successors of the Conqueror who had ruled England for sixty-seven years, no one had worn the crown by a clear hereditary right. At last one had arisen whose claim none could dare to controvert. The daughter of Henry I., indeed, was alive, and had the same title to the throne which she had so strenuously asserted in the reign of Stephen. But the convention with that king established the right of her son Henry II., beyond the possibility of any new contention. Henry was in Normandy when Stephen died ; and it was six weeks after that death before he arrived in England. He was crowned at Westminster, on the 19th of December, 1154,—the first king of the Plantagenet race, which ruled England for more than three centuries.

Arms of Henry II.

HENRY II.

At the time of his accession Henry II. was twenty-one years of age. His reign extended over thirty-five years. It was a memorable period, in which, although the government was essentially despotic, there was a decided advance in the equal administration of justice, and in the subjection of a cruel and turbulent aristocracy to the consolidated power of an energetic and intellectual king. The personal character of Henry gives a distinctive colour to the events of his reign, and especially in his great contest to maintain the supremacy of the civil power over the ecclesiastical. The brilliant morning of his life, compared with its dark and stormy evening, lends, also, a dramatic interest to this portion of our history. There is a remarkable unity in the whole story; and in following it out in its exhibition of individual passions and aspirations, we shall best evolve the characteristics of the age.

Planta genista.

To repair the evils of the reign of Stephen required in the new government the rare union of vigour and moderation. Though a young man of strong passions, Henry held over them the control of a firm will and a commanding intellect. He went steadily to his great work of substituting law and order for violence and confusion. He expelled the foreign mercenaries by whom the people had been grievously plundered. He demolished the castles which had been the hiding-places of privileged robbers. He recovered those lands of the crown which had been improvidently alienated by Stephen. He abolished the private mints which had been as numerous as the castles, and claimed the exclusive sovereign right of issuing a new coinage. Much of this counter revolution required to be effected by military force; but the arduous labour appears to have been carried through with little injustice and less cruelty. He had an able grand-justiciary in the Earl of Leicester; and the counsels of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, were those of conciliation and peace. In his own person he attended vigilantly to the administration of justice. "He did not sit still in his palace, as most other kings do, but going over the provinces examined into the actions of his subjects, chiefly forming his judgment of those whom he had appointed the judges of others." * The chancellor of Henry, who became the most influential of his advisers, was Thomas-à-Becket.

Silver Penny of Henry II. From a specimen in British Museum.

Gilbert Becket was a citizen of London in the reign of Henry I. His son Thomas was born there in 1119. Romantic as are the vicissitudes of the career of this extraordinary man, there is also a romance attached to the lives of his father and mother, which monkish legend has embodied and sober history has not rejected.† Gilbert Becket was in the Holy Land after the

* Peter of Blois.

† Lord Campbell, in his "Lives of the Chancellors," is indignant with Turner and Thierry telling the story of "Gilbert," which he calls "deluding their readers." He should have included Macintosh amongst the deluders. Are all Lord Campbell's stories "evidence?" May we ask where Lord Campbell finds that "racing, hunting, and hawking were amusements forbidden to the Saxons?" The Forest Laws limited the chase to certain classes, whether

first Crusade, when the pilgrim might journey to Jerusalem without restraint. But Gilbert in his wanderings fell into the hands of a Saracen, and was held by him in long captivity. The misbeliever took a pleasure in the society of the Englishman; and the Emir's daughter bore towards him a tenderer regard. Gilbert by her aid escaped, and returned to London. A few years after, in that commercial city, to whose quays ships came from the East laden with silks and spices and frankincense, a lady was wandering through its streets and markets, who could utter no intelligible words but "London" and "Gilbert;" and so she moved on, a desolate stranger, with those sounds of fond remembrance only on her lips. Gilbert and the beautiful

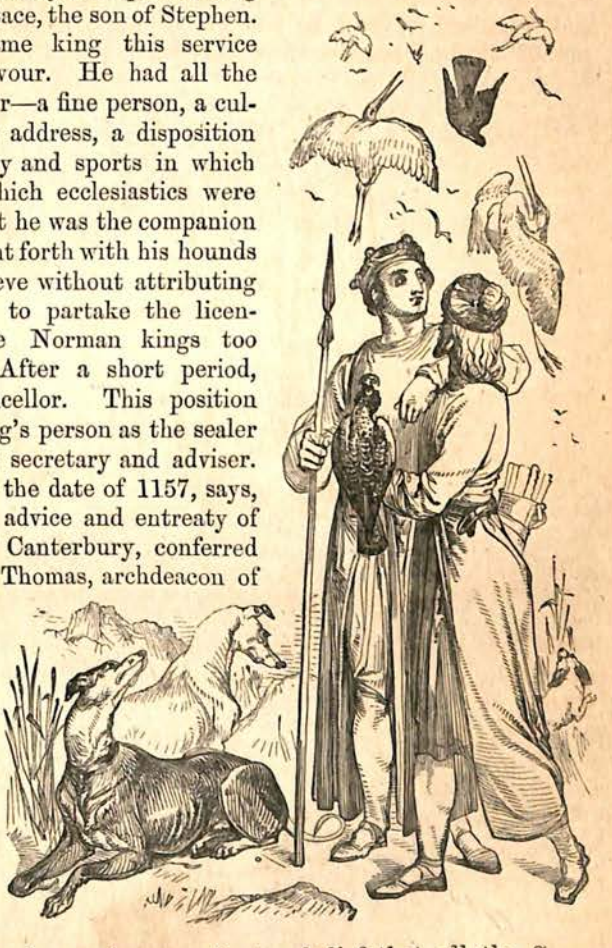
Marriage of the Father and Mother of Becket (From the Royal MS. 2 B. vii.)

oriental at last met. She became Becket's wife, and the mother of his famous son. The story is found in Brompton, one of our early chroniclers. The character of Thomas-à-Becket is not inconsistent with the belief that he came of parents from whom he might derive that union of enthusiastic impulse which belonged to a Syrian mother, and of unbending obstinacy which was the characteristic of an Anglo-Saxon father.

Thomas-à-Becket received his early education at the Abbey of Merton. In the schools of London he was trained in that intellectual gladiatorship which was as remarkable as the military sports of the citizens. The disputations of these schools have been amusingly described by Fitz-Stephen. On festival days the scholars assembled in the churches, and there contended, with logical precision or rhetorical sophistry. Like many modern orators, they were "deemed clever according to their fluency of speech." They wrangled about mood and tense; assailed each other with bitter epigram and Socratic wit; and spared not even great personages in their scoffs and sarcasms. To complete his accomplishments young Becket went to Paris, and there he acquired, what was as important to his advancement as

* Norman or Saxon; but the citizens of London had their especial privilege of hunting-grounds, and, therefore, Becket need not have earned the good graces of a Norman baron to be allowed to hunt, as Lord Campbell intimates.

philosophy and divinity, a perfect mastery of the French language, and a thorough conquest of the unhappy English accent which marked the still despised Saxon race. He returned to England with more chivalric accomplishments than entirely befitted his clerical vocation. His abilities soon commanded attention, and he received valuable benefices from Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, and became archdeacon of that diocese. By him he was employed in two difficult negotiations at Rome, one of which was to obtain a papal bull against any bishop officiating at the coronation of Eustace, the son of Stephen. When Henry II. became king this service brought Becket into favour. He had all the qualifications of a courtier—a fine person, a cultivated mind, a pleasing address, a disposition to engage in the revelry and sports in which nobles delighted, and which ecclesiastics were not severe to shun. That he was the companion of the king, when he went forth with his hounds and hawks, we may believe without attributing to him any disposition to partake the licentiousness in which the Norman kings too frequently indulged. After a short period, he was appointed chancellor. This position placed him about the king's person as the sealer of his writs, and as his secretary and adviser. Hoveden, writing under the date of 1157, says, "The said king, by the advice and entreaty of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, conferred the chancellorship upon Thomas, archdeacon of Canterbury, and bestowed upon him many revenues, both ecclesiastical, and of a secular nature, and received him so much into his esteem and familiarity, that throughout the kingdom there was no one his equal; save the king alone." Lord Campbell, with a too ready acquiescence in the belief that all the Saxons were still aliens and serfs, says, "We may imagine the joy of the Saxon race in witnessing his elevation." The biographer of the chancellors, who has carefully looked at Lyttelton for his account of Becket, passes over the remarkable quotation which Lyttelton gives from a contemporary author, Ailredus, who says that England had now, in the middle of the twelfth century, "not only a king, but many bishops and abbots, many great earls and noble knights, who, being descended both from the Norman and English blood, were an honour to the one, and a comfort to the other."



Had it been otherwise—had the Saxon race been as jealous of the Norman as if ninety years had made no change in their position and their feelings—we may imagine that the elevation of a Saxon who had adopted the Norman language; wore the Norman dress; eagerly sought all the Norman privileges, as an inmate of great houses, when he was young; and now indulged in all the Norman luxuries of delicate meats and rich wines, and displayed his gold and silver vessels in the eyes of earls and barons—we may imagine that his countrymen and fellow-citizens would regard him as an alien and an upstart, rather than as a representative of their race, and an advocate of their rights. The ostentation of this favourite of the young king, if we are to believe Fitz-Stephen, was as remarkable as that of Wolsey, in a later age. His rooms, after the homely fashion which lasted for centuries, were covered with clean straw and hay in winter, and with clean rushes and boughs in summer. But they glittered with the rude magnificence of rich furniture, amidst which the chancellor and his retainers moved in sumptuous apparel, and sate at costly banquets. These demonstrations of wealth and hospitality were common to many of the privileged classes. But when we are told that "many nobles and knights paid homage to the chancellor, which he received with a saving of their allegiance to the king," and "he then maintained and supported them as their patron," we may suspect Fitz-Stephen of a little of that exaggeration which tempted him to assign eighty thousand fighting men to London. There is a little inconsistency, too, about the relation of Becket's excessive familiarity with Henry: "Serious business being finished, the king and he consorted as young comrades of the same station—whether in the palace, in church, in private society, or in excursions on horseback." Young comrades they certainly were not. Hoveden gives the date 1157 as that of Becket's elevation to the chancellorship. Becket was then thirty-eight years of age—Henry twenty-four. Henry is recorded by Fitz-Stephen to have pulled Becket's scarlet cloak from his back to give to a beggar in the public streets. But Becket was neither a young comrade, nor of the same station as the author of the practical joke. The incident is related to show the excessive favour with which Becket was regarded, and how he and the king stood in the relation of equal friends. Kings, even to very recent times, have indulged in this horse-play with their table companions. But Henry was not a man to encourage such dangerous familiarity. We have a very minute picture of this king at a later period of his life, but before he had lost the alacrity of spirit which was as much a portion of his nature as his solid understanding and inflexible will. The portrait which we subjoin is a reduced copy from that of Peter of Blois. He is of middle size, inclined to corpulency, if he had not subdued the tendency by constant exercise. His head is spherical. His hair, slightly red, is not scant, but it is closely cut, and is now touched with grey. His face is lion-like, and almost square. His round eyes are gentle in his moods of calm, but when he is angry they flash fire. His broad chest and brawny arms proclaim his strength and activity. His feet are arched, and his shins like a horse's. His ungloved hands are coarse from constant exposure; and his legs are bruised by the kicks of the wild steeds that he rides. He stands on his feet from morning to night, when engaged in business; but if his plans require his presence he will make in one day a journey that would usually

occupy four or five days, and tires out the strongest man by his excursions. His dress is of the plainest character—no peaked boots or flowing mantles, but all tight and serviceable. No one is shrewder in council, readier in speaking, more self-possessed in danger, more careful in prosperity, more firm in adversity. His court is a daily school, where he constantly discusses hard questions, and obtains knowledge from learned men. His moderation in eating and drinking is habitual. No one is more gentle and affable to the poor and distressed; but no one is more overbearing to the proud. By the carriage of himself like a deity, it has always been his study to put down the insolent, to encourage the oppressed, and to repress the swellings of pride by continual and deadly persecution. If this portrait be true to the life, we can scarcely reconcile the character of the Plantagenet with the indulgence of those undignified freedoms towards Becket, which assume that the king had no self-respect, and had no desire to make the ministers of his power respected by his subjects. Still less can we reconcile that character with the accredited stories of his disposition to pamper the "unbounded stomach" of his chancellor. Henry sent Becket to the court of France to contract an alliance of marriage with his eldest son and the daughter of the French king. We can understand how Becket would naturally have been accompanied by a splendid retinue, and have the means of making lavish gifts. But, according to Fitz-Stephen, he took with him two hundred knights and nobles, forming his body-guard, with a train amounting altogether to a thousand persons—marching through the towns of France with laden waggons and sumpter horses, bearing coffers of money and plate, and holy vessels of his chapel, with the strange accompaniments of a monkey on each horse; whilst two hundred and fifty pages sang verses, and standards waved, and esquires bore the shields of the knights, and soldiers and priests rode two and two. All this pomp appears to be rather more for the honour of the sovereign's representative, than a sovereign who studied to put down the insolent and repress the swellings of pride would be willing to encourage. Henry himself was a hater of pomp and ceremony; and we doubt whether he would readily have borne the expense of this display for the barren gratification of hearing that the French people exclaimed, "How wonderful must be the King of England himself, whose chancellor travels in such state." A little later in Becket's history we find that he raised a force of seven hundred knights at his own expense, and marched at their head to the siege of Toulouse; and in a subsequent campaign we learn that the chancellor, beside seven hundred knights of his own family, had under his command twelve hundred cavalry, whom he had taken into pay, and four thousand infantry, for the space of forty days. In five years, then, we see an adventurer, a deacon only in the Church, and therefore an ecclesiastic who might, without offence, be a courtier and a soldier, and indulge in the license of courts and camps,—we see this London citizen having earls to do him homage, and knights to follow in his train. Exaggerated as all this may be, a love of display was a part of his character. He did everything for effect, at every period of his life. Of unbounded ambition, of overbearing pride, and we will venture to believe of very doubtful honesty, he followed for eight years the path of secular greatness, having the confidence of the king in his undoubted ability, and securing that confidence by his agreeable qualities. His predilections were not in the least

towards that Church of which he received the revenues almost in the capacity of lay-impropriator. When the bishops and abbots, who had declined the old personal service in the field as barons, refused to pay a commutation-tax, Becket, as chancellor, enforced their submission. He then laughed at the threat of excommunication. He had the profits of his Church preferments, and he cared for little more. Archdeacon of Canterbury, Dean of Hastings, Provost of Beverley, Prebendary of many stalls, he had an interest in the Church; but he had little love for the essentials of religion. Undazzled with the power and ambition of this man, we as yet see only the unscrupulous favourite of a king who was too wise long to trust himself to favourites.

The first seven years of Henry's reign were not without the vicissitudes of policy and the difficulties of war. His continental dominions made him a dangerous rival to his feudal superior, the King of France; and he aimed at the extension of his power rather than its concentration. Normandy was his, by the same right as England. He derived the sovereignty of Aquitaine from his marriage. His father was Count of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine; and he would have lawfully inherited these possessions had he not sworn that he would perform every article of his father's will. One article was that he should resign these territories to his younger brother, Geoffrey, should Henry obtain possession of England. Henry applied to the Roman see to give him a dispensation from his oath, which he said he had blindly taken; and the obsequious pontiff granted the formidable king's desire. Geoffrey was not so easily satisfied, and assembled an army; but his brother quickly subjected him, and gave him a pension to compensate for the loss of his coronet. Henry did homage to Louis, of France, for all these vast possessions; and Louis "had reason to tremble" whilst he received Henry's fealty.*

On his return to England in 1157, the king, not unnaturally, sought to recover that power which England had lost to Scotland during the reign of Stephen. The counties of Cumberland and Northumberland had passed into the possession of the Scottish crown, either as fiefs or by especial grant. There was an oath in the way of their resumption, which had been imposed upon Henry when a youth under the protection of his great-uncle, the Scottish king. But the surrender of the northern counties, which Henry demanded, could not be resisted; and the young king Malcolm also did homage to Henry for Lothian. This homage, according to Sir Walter Scott, "was done by the Scottish kings for Lothian, simply because it had been a part or moiety of Northumberland, ceded by Eadulf Cudel, a Saxon earl of Northumberland, to Malcolm II., on condition of amity and support in war, for which, as feudal institutions gained ground, feudal homage was the natural substitute and emblem." †

But there was a part of the British dominions which did not promise so easy a settlement of ancient rivalries as in the case of Scotland. Wales, during the contest between Stephen and Matilda, had, under brave chieftains, recovered much of its ancient territory from the English. It was the policy of Henry's government to obliterate the remembrance of the evil time that had interposed between the reign of his grandfather and his own accession. To assert the authority of England over the Welsh princes was a part of this

* Daniel, quoted in Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 316.
† "History of Scotland," in "Lardner's Cyclopædia," vol. i. p. 36.

policy. In 1157, the king led a powerful army into Flintshire. He had previously strengthened the Flemish colony of sturdy artisans in Pembrokeshire, who had maintained their ground against the Welsh till the end of the reign of Stephen. When Henry marched into North Wales, to encounter the chief Owen Gwynneth, Owen was encamped at Basingwerk. Henry, somewhat rashly, entered a narrow and woody defile, called Eulo, near Coleshill, in the parish of Holywell. The Welsh, with all the advantage of local knowledge, routed the king's forces. Henry then marched along the coast, but gained no advantage, because "he was principally advised by people remote from the marches, and ignorant of the manners and customs of the natives." Thus writes Giraldus de Barri, called Giraldus Cambrensis, who accompanied Archbishop Baldwin to preach the Crusade in Wales, in 1188, and has given us a description of the country and its inhabitants. Very unimportant changes would have been effected in the social condition of the people in thirty years after Henry II. went upon his first expedition; and we may therefore, with this authority, here take a general view of these interesting descendants of the early Britons.

Giraldus, in his journey from Radnor through the district between the Wye and the Usk, sees lands abounding with grain, and well stored with pastures and woods. There are salmon and trout in the rivers, and there are wild and domestic animals. The people are perpetually engaged in bloody conflicts; though churches are numerous. The ploughman sings to his oxen as they work, and the maidens spin the thread and throw the shuttle. At Lanthoni Abbey the monks, sitting in their cloisters, look upon the mountains, with herds of wild deer feeding on their summits. At Caerleon, near Newport, he saw the vestiges of Roman architectural magnificence—temples and theatres, vaults and aqueducts, and stoves contrived with wonderful art. Keeping near the coast from Llandaff, the cavalcade crossed the sands by the estuary of the Nith, which Giraldus calls the most dangerous and inaccessible river in South Wales; and here his pack-horse sank in the quicksands, but was happily extricated, without the loss of the books which he bore. Swansea then had its castle, at which the pilgrims slept; but there was no sound of industry, and the mineral riches of that region lay hidden. At Haverford, Giraldus takes occasion to speak of the Flemings,—a people well versed in commerce and woollen manufactures—a hardy race, equally fitted for the plough or the sword—who inhabited this province of Ros. Menorbeer, a small village on the coast between Tenbigh and Pembroke, the birth-place of Giraldus, is affectionately described by him as the pleasantest spot in Wales. Journeying from St. David's to Cardigan, he records the marvels of the Teivi, where the salmon leap up a river cataract, falling from a height equal to the longest spear. But the Teivi has a greater curiosity in natural history. It is the only river in Wales, or even in England, which has beavers. In Scotland they are said to be found, he remarks, in one river only. His description of the beaver's habits differs little from the observations of more accurate naturalists. Merionethshire is the rudest and roughest district of all Wales; and here the people display the military attribute of North Wales, in throwing a long lance with prodigious power, whilst those of the South excel in the use of the bow. As he journeys on to Caernarvon he hears the woodpecker, but the nightingale is never heard. Mona (Anglesea) contains three hundred

and forty-three villages; and, though a dry and stony land, is so fertile in corn, as to be called "the mother of Wales." Crossing the Dee below Chester, he proceeds into Powys. In this district there is a breed of horses of remarkable fleetness, deriving their origin from Spanish horses brought into these parts by Robert de Belèsme, earl of Shrewsbury. The archbishop and his train, having thus made the circuit of the country by the coast and border lands, with little observation of the interior, reach the point from which they set out, having signed three thousand men with the cross, well skilled in the use of arrows and lances. Let us glean a few particulars of these people from the "Description of Wales," by the same writer.

Light and active, hardy rather than strong, the nation universally is trained to arms. Flesh is consumed by the people more than bread, with milk, cheese, and butter. With this pastoral character, having little agriculture, they are always ready for war; and they have neither commerce nor manufactures. They fish with the little wicker boats which they carry to their rivers. Lightly armed with small breastplates, helmets, and shields, they attack their mailed foes with lance and arrow. They have some cavalry, but the marshy nature of the soil compels the greater number to fight on foot. Abstemious both in food and drink, frugal, and capable of bearing great privations, they watch their enemies through the cold and stormy nights, always bent upon defence or plunder. Their hospitality is universal; for the houses of all are common to all. The conversation of the young women, and the music of the harp, give a charm to their humble fare; and no jealousy interferes with the freedom with which a stranger is welcomed by the females of the household. When the evening meal is finished, a bed of rushes is placed in the side of the room, and all without distinction lie down to sleep. The men and women cut their hair close round to the ears and eyes; and the men shave all their beard except the whiskers. Of their white teeth they are particularly careful. They are of an acute intellect, and excel in whatever studies they pursue. They have three musical instruments, the harp, the pipe, and the crowd; and their performances are executed with such celerity and delicacy of modulation, that they produce a perfect consonance from the rapidity of seemingly discordant touches. Their bards, in their rhymed songs, and their orators, in their set speeches, make use of alliteration in preference to all other ornament. In their musical concerts they do not sing in unison, but in many different parts; and it is unusual to hear a simple melody well sung. The heads of families think it their duty to amuse their guests by their facetiousness. The highest, as well as the lowest of the people, have a remarkable boldness and confidence in speaking and answering; and their natural warmth of temper is distinguished from the English coldness of disposition. They have many soothsayers amongst them. Noble birth, and generous descent, they esteem above all things. Even the common people retain genealogy. They revenge with vehemence any injuries which may tend to the disgrace of their blood, whether an ancient or a recent affront. They are universally devout, and they show a greater respect than other nations to churches and ecclesiastical persons, and especially revere relics of saints. Giraldus, having described at much length the particulars which redound to the credit of the British nation (for so he calls the Welsh), then proceeds to those things which pass the line of encomium. The people he says, are inconstant, and

regardless of any covenant. They commit acts of plunder, not only against foreigners and hostile nations, but against their own countrymen. Bold in their warlike onsets, they cannot bear a repulse, and trust to flight for safety; but defeated one day, they are ready to resume the conflict on the next. Their ancient national custom of dividing property amongst all the brothers of a house leads to perpetual contests for possessions, and frequent fratricides. They constantly intermarry within the forbidden degrees, uniting themselves to their own people, presuming on their own superiority of blood and family; and they rarely marry without previous cohabitation. Their churches have almost as many parties and parsons as there are principal men in the parish; the sons, after the decease of the father, succeed to the ecclesiastical benefices, not by election, but by assumed hereditary right. Finally, in setting forth how this people is to be subdued, and preserved to the English crown, Giraldus says that from the pride and obstinacy of their dispositions they will not, like other nations, subject themselves to the dominion of one lord and king. How long a time it was before that subjection was even imperfectly accomplished, will be seen as we proceed in our narrative.*

It is not within the scope of this history, nor would it add greatly to its interest, to follow out the negotiations and wars in which the Norman princes were engaged with regard to their continental dominions. Henry II., having a larger extent of territory to defend, and a stronger disposition to acquire more, than any of his predecessors, had at this period abundant need of his talent and energy. His pretensions to Toulouse roused the hostility of Louis of France. Becket was his boldest adviser in this war; for he counselled Henry to take Toulouse by assault, and secure Louis as his prisoner. Henry had scruples about a direct attack on his feudal superior, and resisted the dangerous counsel. He went to Normandy, and then Becket, in company with Henry, Earl of Essex, stormed castles and fought battles, with his own hundreds of knights and thousands of mercenaries. It would be difficult to say how the people of England were governed in the absence of the king and his favourite chancellor, if we placed implicit credit in the common opinion that Becket, in England, presided in the Aula Regis, superintended the domestic administration of the kingdom, was preceptor to the king's sons, and altogether the great master-spirit of the government. We believe that he was a most convenient instrument in the hands of the sagacious king—having one heart, and one mind, as Peter of Blois writes—because the chancellor was wholly moulded by the inflexible regal will, as long as he stood in a position of dependence. Whether he partook Henry's pleasures, assumed his port and state as an ambassador, or fought his battles as a military chief, the ambitious deacon was still a servant, and, in all probability, subject to the passionate outbursts of a lord who is described as "a lamb when in good humour, but a lion, or worse than a lion, when seriously angry." † The capricious energy of the king was often most harassing to his courtiers. He would announce his intention to take a journey in three days, and would start the next morning at day-break, when every one must start with him; and therefore the good Peter of Blois thus prays,—"Make

* We have condensed this view of Wales and the Welsh of the twelfth century from the two volumes of Giraldus, translated by Sir Richard Colt Hoare.

† Peter of Blois.

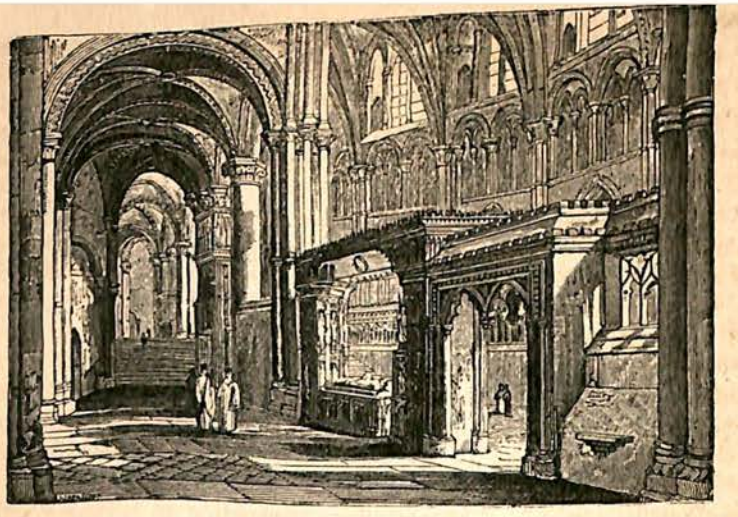
him know that he is a man, and let him have and practise the grace of royal bounty and kindness to those who are compelled to follow him, not from ambition but from necessity." It is not difficult to understand how the haughty spirit of Becket would silently rebel under this servile yoke. But wealth flowed in upon him. In addition to his vast pluralities in the Church, he was warden of the Tower, and had other lay offices. But the time of his life was come when the desire of power is a stronger motive than the excitement of acquiring riches or the seduction of luxurious gratifications. Becket, in 1162, was forty-three years of age. Henry, upon the death of Theobald, the archbishop of Canterbury, had offered his chancellor the primacy. He, known only in the Church as a deacon, never having discharged any clerical office—a soldier more than a priest—one who had devoted himself rather to hunting and falconry than to the study of the scriptures—(for so runs a protest against Becket's appointment)—was not exactly the man to raise the honour of a Church against whose corruptions that spirit of satire which is most dangerous under repression had already burst forth. There was a certain Walter Mapes living in those times, who is popularly known as the writer of a drinking-song, but who was one of many who from the days of Henry II. poured out his scholarly invective in bitter rhymes against the corruptions of the monastic orders, and the encroachments of the ecclesiastical power. A Latin poem ascribed to Walter Mapes, entitled, "Apocalypsis Goliæ," describes the Pope as a lion that thirsts after gold,—the bishop as a calf that feeds on other men's pastures,—the archdeacon as an eagle that sees afar off his prey,—the dean with the shape of a man, but full of fraud and deceit. The satires of the days of the Reformation were thus preceded by those of the twelfth century.* Did Becket cast off the sleeved cloak of the gay courtier, to put on the hair-shirt of the penitent archbishop, that he might effect that change in the Church which in moderating her worldly pretensions would have increased her spiritual power over the hearts and consciences of men? The dignity of the primacy was forced upon him, it is said. Henry knew that he had a great battle to fight against an authority out of his realm which claimed to hold in subjection the mightiest order within his realm. The civil power, too, had been gradually encroached upon by the ecclesiastical, for nearly a century. The first William, in separating the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals, had made a political mistake. In the abuse of that separation, those who belonged to the priesthood were not subject to the laws of the state for the punishment of crime. They claimed to be tried by their own courts, and those courts were partial. The inequality required adjustment; and Becket was chosen as Henry's reliable agent, to bring the Church within the bounds of its lawful authority and influence.

There is nothing more difficult than to form an impartial judgment of the men of a past age, if we do not wholly lay aside the tests which we apply to the motives and principles of the men of our own age. Lord Campbell, in speaking of the sincerity of Becket's devotion to the Church, says: "Let us consider the sudden effect of the touch of the mitre on men of honour in our own time." How can such a comparison in the least enable us to understand the case of Becket? A newly-created bishop may give a

* See the "Latin Poems attributed to Walter Mapes," published by the Camden Society.

vote against the minister who raised him, with perfect satisfaction to his own conscience. But Becket, in accepting the primacy, must have thoroughly known that he must take one of two courses—either to be a moderator between the State and the Church, or to precipitate the Church into a contest with the State. His biographer, Fitz-Stephen, relates that Becket thought he should be driven, if he accepted the primacy, to lose the king's favour, or to sacrifice the service of God. It is said that the king's mother warned her son that Becket would become a rival, and disturb the peace of the kingdom. Becket paused a year before he accepted the archbishopric. What struggles must that mind have undergone before he resolved to enter upon that dangerous course which his enthusiasm saw before him! After his election and consecration, he resigned his office of chancellor, to the great offence of the king. Through that common mistake of judging extraordinary men and actions by a familiar standard, an acute historian writes, "By continuing to flatter the king's wishes, and by uniting in himself the offices of chancellor and archbishop, he might, in all probability, have ruled without control both in Church and State." * What would such a rule have been to Becket? There were two thrones to be filled in England, as we venture to interpret the views of the archbishop—the throne of Canterbury and the throne of Westminster. It was not with him a question of revenue, a question of self-gratification, a question of the best management of a mixed and subordinate power. He well knew the character of the man with whom he should have to contend. He had a just estimate of the strength of the nobles who would be banded against him. But the authority of the universal Church had already made kings hold the Pope's stirrup; and Gregory VII. had excommunicated an emperor of Germany, and compelled him to wait his pleasure, for three winter days, in his outer courts, with all the humiliation of naked feet and the penitent's woollen shirt. What Pope Gregory was in the eleventh century, Pope Alexander would be in the twelfth, if Henry were contumacious. It was no vulgar ambition that precipitated a contest in which the Saxon priest should defy the Norman king, and make all Christendom look on with wonder at his courage and unequalled self-reliance. Coleridge calls this contest "the struggle between the men of arms and of letters, in the persons of Henry and Becket." † The poetical critic suggests this as the subject of a drama. But a true historical play would not marshal a fiery king and an ignorant nobility on one side, and a mild prelate and a learned clergy on the other. It would show an almost unprecedented battle between a wise and accomplished statesman, strong in the possession of powers almost despotic, and a most fearless and proud ecclesiastic, confident in his own intellectual strength, and fortified by the support of his spiritual superior. The two great principles upon which the world was to be governed had come into mortal conflict, instead of each moderating the other, and harmonising for the common good. The men of arms and the men of letters looked on with fear and wonder.

* Lingard, "History of England," vol. ii. chap. 5.
† "Literary Remains," vol. ii. p. 162. 8vo.



Canterbury.

CHAPTER XX.

Deportment of Becket as Archbishop—State of the Secular Law—Clerical Exemption from Secular Law—Council of Clarendon—Constitutions of Clarendon—Becket arraigned at Northampton—Becket's Flight from England—Excommunication—Punishment of Heretics—Henry and Becket meet at Touraine—Becket returns to England—His Murder at Canterbury—Consequences of Becket's Murder—The Shrine of Becket.

In the June of 1162, Becket was elected archbishop of Canterbury by the suffragan bishops and the prior and monks of Canterbury, assembled at Westminster. In this proceeding there was nothing beyond the pretence of election; for Henry had sent his justiciary from Normandy, to bear his royal mandate for the elevation of his chancellor to the primacy. No churchman dared to raise an objection to this arbitrary command. One only, the bishop of Hereford, ventured to express his opinion, in saying that the king had worked a miracle, for he had turned a layman and a soldier into an archbishop. Becket was then, at Canterbury, ordained a priest; and afterwards consecrated with extraordinary magnificence. But the mandate of Henry had worked a more miraculous transformation than that described by the bishop of Hereford—a metamorphosis as unexpected by the king as by the church. The man who had displayed before the astonished people the most extravagant luxury, with nobles in his train and belted knights for his body-guard, now wears a monk's frock and a hair cloth next his skin; feeds the poor daily in his private chambers, waiting on them, and washing their feet; entertains the great in his hospitable halls, but allows no one to sit at his own table except monks and other ecclesiastics; hears a Latin book read aloud, instead of listening, as was his wont, to the music of the banquet; and when, in the holiest office of the cathedral, he kneels before the altar, weeps and groans as the most afflicted of penitents. The king is astonished that Becket should

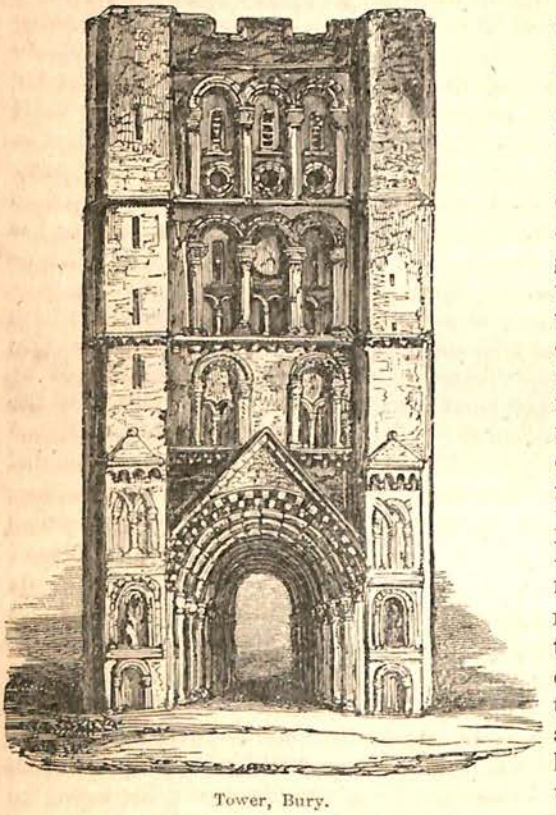
have resigned the chancellorship. He comes to England, and is met by the primate at Southampton. Henry now knows that the predictions of his mother were not altogether vain. He calls up that lightning of his eyes which Peter de Blois describes, and requires the archbishop to give up his archdeaconry, which he had continued, illegally, to retain. Becket is obliged to yield. The old friendship is gone.

The next year the archbishop, with most of the other dignitaries of the church, proceeded to a great council at Tours, to meet Pope Alexander and his cardinals. It was here determined that a severe canon should be made against all who usurped the goods of the Church. Upon his return to England the archbishop demanded from several barons, and even from the crown, the restoration of manors and castles which had belonged to the see of Canterbury. The claim of resumption went back to the time of William I., Becket maintaining that no length of possession could establish the property of the church as a lay fee. Henry was not deterred, by this spirit in him who had been the creature of his bounty, and upon whom he had reckoned as the most effective minister of his will, from proceeding in a course which he knew was essential to the well-being of his people.

The separation of the secular and the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, which had been effected in the reign of William I., had made an important revolution in the administration of justice. That great innovation was announced by William as having been made in the common council with the advice of the archbishops, bishops, and abbots, and of all the chief men of the kingdom.* From the period of this separation, the administration of civil justice had been gradually becoming more essentially connected with the kingly office; whilst under the Saxons no man was to apply to the king in any suit, unless he at home might not be law-worthy, or could not obtain law. By "at home" was meant the local courts, whether of the manor or the county. The Curia Regis,—the Court of King's Bench,—is held to have been "confirmed and fully established by Henry II., if not originally instituted by that prince." † There were itinerant justices of assize, with occasional commissions, in the reign of Henry I.; but in the 22nd year of Henry II. they regularly went their circuits. When this active and sagacious king had been on the throne ten years, he had, in a great degree, brought all his lay subjects under the equal rule of the laws. The country was rapidly recovering from the miseries of the time of Stephen, and the people were increasing in numbers as their profitable industry also increased. The old Saxon principle of "bot," or pecuniary compensation for crime, had, for the most part, been superseded by criminal laws, administered with stern severity. At this period, Trial by Jury,—although the duties of a juror were, in many respects, different from those of modern times,—was coming into general use; and in 1176 a precise enactment established the jury as the usual mode of trial: "The justices, who represented the king's person, were to make inquiry by the oaths of twelve knights, or other lawful men, of each hundred, together with the four men from each township, of all murders, robberies, and thefts, and of all who had harboured such offenders, since the king's accession to the throne." ‡ But these twelve knights, or other lawful men, were not before the king's

* Allen, in "Edinburgh Review," vol. xxxv. p. 15. † Ibid., p. 8.
‡ Sir F. Palgrave, "English Commonwealth."

justices to decide upon the credibility of evidence, or to hear questions of law and fact discussed and argued. They were often called "recognitors." They were essentially witnesses. Mr. Hallam, speaking of the learned investigations of Sir F. Palgrave on this question, says, "This theory is sustained by a great display of erudition, which fully establishes that the jurors had such a knowledge, however acquired, of the facts, as enabled them to render a verdict without hearing any other testimony in open court than that of the parties themselves, fortified, if it might be, by written documents adduced."* Mr. Hallam points out that several instances of recognition—that is, of jurors finding facts of their own knowledge—occur in the "Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond." We give one instance, in 1191, upon a question whether certain lands were the frank fee of the church or not: "And when there was summoned an inquest of twelve knights to make inquest in the king's court, the inquest was taken in the court of the abbot of Harlow, by the licence of Ranulf de Glanville; and the recognitors swore that they never knew that land at any time to be separated from the church." † It is unnecessary to pursue this subject to show, at this point of our history, how the administration of justice, criminal and civil, was undergoing many important changes connected with the changes of society, and was approaching, by gradual steps, to that state in which the "inquest by the country" became the great safeguard of life and property. Mr. Hallam has truly said, "In its rudest and most imperfect form, the trial by a sworn inquest was far superior to the impious superstition of ordeals, the hardly less preposterous and unequal duel, the unjust deference to power in compurgation, when the oath of one thane counterbalanced those of six ceorls, and even to the free-spirited but tumultuous and unenlightened decisions of the hundred or the county." ‡ That the recognitors were generally very ignorant, and too frequently corrupt, was unavoidable, in an age when knowledge was chiefly confined to



Tower, Bury.

* "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 393 ; ed. 1855.

† The original of this Latin Chronicle of the Monk of Bury was published by the Camden Society, and is translated by T. E. Tomlins, Esq.

‡ "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 405.

the clergy, and oaths, as we have often seen, were held of light account. Jocelin de Brakelond gives a curious instance. Five knights came to the abbot of Bury, having been summoned upon an inquest respecting an advowson, and "tempting the abbot," asked what it was they ought to swear. But the abbot would neither give, nor promise them anything, but said,—"When the oath shall be administered, declare the right according to your consciences." The honest abbot of course lost his suit.

We have thus indicated, without attempting to enter upon any elaborate examination of controverted points, the general state of the English secular law in the time of Henry II. We have done so to show that, however imperfect were the securities against the escape of the guilty or the oppression of the innocent, justice was systematically administered under the royal authority; and that the barbarous violence of the early days of feudal tenures was passing rapidly away. The position of the Church presented an insuperable obstacle to the equal administration of the laws. The clergy claimed an exemption from all secular judicature. Whilst the murderer and the robber were punished with death if tried in the courts of the crown, the vilest offender, if a clerk, escaped the extreme penalty of his offence, and was often freed from all consequences except that of pecuniary compensation. The number of persons in holy orders was enormous. The vast extension of religious houses, and the general increase of the revenues of the ecclesiastics, had opened the doors of the Church even to the Saxon serf; and to many the profession of a clerk, if it brought no endowment or regular provision, offered a security against want in the alms of the pious, and a protection against the oppressions of the lay-barons. Called upon for knight-service, the bishops and abbots had men in their retinues who were half-priest and half-soldier; and whose habits of life had little of the purity and peacefulness that belonged to the more educated and better principled of the order. It has been stated that in the first years of Henry II. there were reckoned nearly one hundred homicides that had been perpetrated by priests then living. After the appointment of Becket to the primacy, a priest of Worcestershire committed the infamous crime of murdering a father, that he might be undisturbed in a guilty intercourse with his daughter. Even such a crime would not, under any circumstances of atrocity, have been punished with death in the church-tribunals. This offender was required to be delivered up for trial in the king's courts. Becket interposed the shield of the Church between the criminal and the outraged laws; and passed upon him a sentence of degradation only, contending that the degraded priest could not be a second time brought to trial for the same offence. Henry called an assembly of prelates at Westminster, and earnestly asserted the public necessity of putting an end to such hideous compromises as the archbishop had maintained. He asked them, "whether they were willing to submit to the ancient laws and customs of the kingdom?" The reply, framed by Becket, was that they would observe them "saving the privileges of their order." The king was indignant; and immediately deprived the archbishop of the temporal appointments which he held at the pleasure of the crown. Some of the friends of Becket counselled his submission; but he said that if an angel should come from heaven, and advise him to abandon the saving clause, he would anathematise him. Yet the passionate man, at the instance, it is

stated, of the pope's almoner, ultimately went to the king and gave his unconditional assent to the demand. But Henry required a more formal assertion of the principle which he maintained, of the equality of the clergy and the laity before the law, than he could obtain from the personal submission of the dangerous archbishop. He called a great council at Clarendon, near Salisbury; and thither came the eminent men of the realm, whether lay or ecclesiastic, who ordinarily sat with the king in this incipient parliament. A series of resolutions were proposed which have since been known as "The Constitutions of Clarendon." These, when passed, were essentially a statute, and had the force of law. They were earnestly debated for three days; and were ultimately carried, even with the consent of Becket. That some force was used to compel his submission is unquestionable. We are scarcely, in our times, in a temper to judge of the exact nature of the particular clauses to which the archbishop, feeling himself in the position of the assertor of the rights of the Church, might honestly object. Taken altogether, they were a formidable attack upon the power of the clergy at home, as well as upon the interference of the papal see with the affairs of the English Church. The preamble to the "Constitutions" declares that they were a record and recognition of the ancient laws and customs which ought to be observed in the kingdom. By this statute, the great point of contest,—that of clerical exemption from the secular arm,—was thus decided: "Ecclesiastics arraigned and accused of any matter, being summoned by the king's justiciary, shall come into his court, to answer there, concerning that which it shall appear to the king's court is cognisable there; and shall answer in the ecclesiastical court, concerning that which it shall appear is cognisable there; so that the king's justiciary shall send to the court of holy Church, to see in what manner the cause shall be tried there: and if an ecclesiastic shall be convicted, or confess his crime, the Church ought not any longer to give him protection."* Pleas of debt, also, whether they were due by faith solemnly pledged, or without faith so pledged, were to belong to the king's judicature. Rights of advowson, and questions of the tenure of property between ecclesiastic and layman, were to be heard before the king's justice and twelve lawful men. These were the most important conditions that related to the great questions in which the body of the people were interested. It would be difficult to understand the opposition of a strong and cultivated mind like that of Becket to such reasonable propositions, if we did not consider how zealously men, in times of more established principles, will battle for points in which the interests of their order, as well as their personal pride, are involved. Equally reasonable appears the clause that no dignified ecclesiastic should leave the realm without licence of the king, who might demand security that he would not procure any evil to the crown or kingdom. Nor are those unreasonable which regulate the excommunication of the king's chief tenants or officers. The clauses which enabled the king to send for the principal clergy of a Church, upon the vacancy of a bishopric or abbacy, and, with the advice of such prelates as he should choose, should give his assent or otherwise to the election, and receive homage, was a distinct assertion of the

* It is singular that Lord Campbell should mis-state this well-known clause,—which, as Mr. Hallam truly says, "is gently expressed,"—by vaguely saying of the Constitutions, "they provide that clerks accused of any crime should be tried in the king's courts."

principle for which Henry I. had contended against Anselm; and we may believe that the prelates who regarded the pope as their spiritual head would be indignant at such a claim. Yet, in spite of Henry's subsequent abandonment of some of the enactments of the Council of Clarendon, we have distinct evidence that his consent to the election of the great ecclesiastics was no idle assertion of authority. We turn to the "Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond," and read how the prior of Saint Edmundsbury, with twelve of his brethren, stood before Henry II. at Waltham, in 1182, who commanded that they should nominate three members of the convent, as candidates for the election; and afterwards that they should nominate three members of other convents; as well as three more of their own. Then the lists were gradually reduced to two of Saint Edmund's, the prior and Sampson. After much hesitation, the bishop of Winchester saw that the good fathers preferred the active and clever subsacrist, to the somewhat indolent prior. "Sampson was then named to the king, and, after a brief consult with those about him, we all of us were called in; then the king said, 'Ye present to me Sampson—I know him not; had ye presented to me your prior, I should have accepted him, because I have known and am well acquainted with him: but now I will do as you desire. Take heed to yourselves: by the very eye of God, if ye act unworthily, I shall call you to severe account.' And he inquired of the prior, whether he assented to this choice, and agreed thereto; who replied, that he was well content it should be so, and that Sampson was much more worthy of the dignity. Sampson being thus chosen, and falling down at the king's feet, and kissing him, hastily arose, and forthwith went towards the altar, singing, 'Miserere mei Dominus,' together with his brethren, erect in gait, and with unmoved countenance. The king observing this, said to the bystanders, 'By the eyes of God, this one that is chosen seems to himself worthy of keeping the abbacy.'" *

The great questions at issue in the memorable controversy connected with the Constitutions of Clarendon must be steadily kept in view, however absorbing may be our interest in the personal conflict between Henry and Becket. On one side was an energetic, determined, and sagacious king, bent upon establishing the regal authority without respect of persons, and enforcing this authority by an assertion of absolute power, founded, in reality, upon physical force. On the other side was a primate, endued with surpassing ability, of a temper as unbending as that of the king, and resolved to establish the domination of the Church over the secular power. The contest was not so unequal as it at first appears. Becket ran the risk of being struck down by some outbreak of rage on the part of the king, or by some tumultuous assault of the men at arms, who were leagued against him. The vacillation which first induced him to accept the Constitutions of Clarendon, and then to withhold his seal from them, was a natural result of the alternations of confidence and alarm. So was his subsequent oath to observe them, and then his self-imposed penance for having taken that oath. The Constitutions were sent to the pope for confirmation, and Alexander refused his consent to ratify them. Then began a course of determined hostility on the part of the archbishop that appeared to shut out all hope of a compromise. He twice

* "Jocelin de Brakelond," translated by Tomlins, p. 7.

endeavoured to leave the kingdom, but was intercepted. Henry saw him after this attempt, and quietly asked him if he thought the same land could not contain them both. Becket, returning to his see, then boldly set about acting in defiance of the statute he had consented to pass. He was arraigned as a traitor, at Northampton, and being held as guilty, his possessions were decreed to be at the king's mercy, which means that the king had absolute

power over them. Henry appears to have acted with little magnanimity, and to have resolved upon his ruin, by raising extravagant demands upon him connected with his period of favour as chancellor. The heroic attitude of this extraordinary man now claims our wonder and almost our admiration. Having preached at the morning service from the text, "Princes sat and spake against me," he went in solemn procession to the king's palace, bearing the archiepiscopal cross in his own hands. As the primate entered the king's hall in this unusual pomp, the king retired; and there he sat, with a few of the humbler clergy only around him, whilst the bishops and nobles had followed the sovereign. Henry was in great anger; and the bishop of Exeter came out, and throwing himself on his knees before Becket, besought him to

have pity on himself, and upon his brethren. His answer was, "Fly, then, thou canst not understand the things that are of God." The bishops then came out, and renounced their obedience to him, on the score that he had sworn falsely to observe the Constitutions, and had then resisted them, and broken his fealty. "I hear what ye say," was his only reply. The barons then pronounced a sentence of imprisonment against him, and the earl of Leicester came into the hall to read the sentence. The archbishop interrupted him with, "Sir earl, hear you first;" and then, after a defence of himself, concluded by disclaiming the king's judgment, and that of the peers, "being only to be judged, under God, by our lord the pope." He then cited the bishops, who, he said, had chosen to obey men rather than God, to appear before the presence of the pope. As he rose to depart, some called him traitor. The ancient spirit of the warrior was roused, and he exclaimed, "If my holy office did not forbid it, I would make answer with my sword." And so Becket went out of the king's hall into the outer court; but the gates were closed. His servants then thought that he was in the hands of his enemies, and that he would be held a prisoner. The minute chronicler, having told us that the Almighty delivered him, adds, "For Peter de Munctorio, one of his servants, espied a number of keys hanging on a nail near the gate, and taking them down, opened it, the king's porters standing by, and uttering not a word." * He then mounted his horse, with crowds following him; and, to close this extraordinary day, he sent out his people to gather the paupers and wayfarers to come into the house where he abode, there to feast and make merry. But in the dead of the night he left the town, in the garb of a monk, with only two attendants. One of them, Herbert de Bosham, left an account of this flight. They rode to Lincoln, and then went by water to a hermitage in the fens. Onwards they travelled on foot to Estrey, near Canterbury, where Becket was concealed by a priest. At the end of fifteen days they embarked in a small fishing-boat at Sandwich, and were set on shore near Gravelines. His escape was a very doubtful issue of his flight, for Henry had given orders that all the sea-ports should be watched. After some adventures, under the name of Friar Christian, he finally passed from the territories of the court of Flanders into France; and was at length luxuriously established, by the influence of the pope, in the abbey of Pontigny, in Burgundy, after an interview with the pontiff at Sens. Henry pursued his ancient friend with a miserable revenge, by banishing all those who were connected with him by any ties, either of blood or affection. The expatriated prelate was less subdued, than even in the early days of this great contest. In 1166 he proceeded from Pontigny to Vezelay, near Auxerre; and, on the festival of the Ascension, mounting the pulpit, denounced all those whom he called the enemies of the Church. Then, the bells tolled, the crosses were inverted, the priests stood around with lighted torches; and the horrible form of excommunication was pronounced against John of Oxford, and certain dignitaries of the Church; against Jocelin de Baliol, the chief justiciary; and against all who should abet, enforce, or obey the Constitutions of Clarendon. The sentence was not pronounced by Becket against Henry himself; but the king was called upon, by name, to

* Hoveden.

repent, and atone for the usage he had offered to the Church, for otherwise the same malediction should fall upon him, and he should be cursed, as those already denounced as evil doers, to whom the heavens should be as brass and the earth as iron,—whose goings-out and comings-in, whose sleeping and waking, should be equally accursed,—who should be visited with hunger and cold, with sickness and blindness,—whom none should compassionate, and for whom even prayers should be turned into curses. At the conclusion of this miserable scene of a blasphemous superstition, the torches were extinguished, even as the souls of those delivered to perdition should be quenched in eternal darkness. Such denunciations look like the ravings of madness, as impotent as they are wicked. They were dreadful realities. The offender so threatened was pursued as unrelentingly by public opinion as the wretched victim of the old Druidical laws,—

"cut off by sacerdotal ire
From every sympathy that man bestow'd."

We should totally mistake the character of that age if we were to conclude that the great battle between Henry and Becket was carried on by the civil power in the spirit which we understand as an assertion of religious liberty. The ecclesiastical and secular authorities were equally ready to repress and punish what were called heretical opinions. In 1166, a synod was convened by Henry at Oxford, to inquire into the proceedings of some families who had come over from Germany, in all about thirty men and women, who had settled at Oxford, having a sort of leader in temporal and spiritual affairs of the name of Gerard. Their lives were perfectly blameless; and their opinions, whatever they might be, were not very attractive, for they had obtained only one English proselyte, a woman of humble station. These inoffensive people were brought before the synod, and were required to make a solemn profession of their faith. They replied, by their leader, that they were Christians, and venerated the doctrines of the Apostles. But, upon minute questions as to the articles of their belief, "they answered perversely and erroneously concerning the sacraments." * In these poor foreigners we recognise the precursors of the Albigenses, the Waldenses, and other sects, who gradually spread through Europe, and were persecuted by imprisonment and death, under inquisitions, and by terrible massacres by bigoted princes. The Germans of Oxford were condemned as obstinate heretics, and were delivered over to the king for punishment. They appear to have had one advocate in John of Oxford, whom Becket excommunicated on that account. This was the first ebullition of heresy in England since the differences of the days of Augustin. An example was to be made; and the wretched exiles were branded, whipped, and turned out naked and bleeding into the fields, in the depth of winter. None dared to succour them, none to pity, and they all miserably perished.

The personal contention between the king of England and the archbishop of Canterbury had proceeded for five years with unabated virulence. Becket, coming forth from his retreat at Pontigny to denounce the vengeance of the Church against the supporters of the Constitutions of Clarendon, offers a no less pitiable example of unchristian anger than Henry, threatening

* William of Newbury.

that he would confiscate all the estates of the Cistercians in England if Becket were still harboured in a Cistercian monastery. The threat had its effect; and the fugitive archbishop, not to bring trouble upon his friends, repaired to Sens, where Louis of France appointed him another asylum. A petty war was proceeding between this king and Henry, sometimes ending in a hollow reconciliation, and again breaking out into new jealousies and revenges. When the two kings were hostile, Louis made Becket an instrument of annoyance to Henry; and Becket himself, whether at Pontigny or Sens, was indefatigable in the unvarying assertion of the justice of his cause, by the most elaborate addresses to the sovereign pontiff, to the king of England, and to various English prelates. Henry lived in constant terror of an interdict, by which the allegiance of his subjects might have been shaken; and the greatest watchfulness was exercised to prevent such an instrument arriving in England. But Henry, also, managed to conciliate the court of Rome by unanswerable arguments, more potent than the bitter letters of Becket to the pontiff, in which the king was called a malicious tyrant. The mortified archbishop implied that he had been deserted for gold, when the pope withdrew the commission by which he had been appointed legate, and prohibited him from excommunicating any person in England, or of using letters of interdict against the kingdom. At last, it was settled that Henry and Becket should meet in a solemn conference, in which the king of France should be present. Terms of agreement were proposed, to which the king assented, with this reservation, "saving the honour of my kingdom." The archbishop assented, "saving the honour of God and the Church." Henry maintained that under this reservation, Becket would interpret everything that was offensive to himself as therein included; and added, "What the greatest and holiest of his predecessors did unto the least of mine, that let him do unto me, and I am contented." The haughty churchman held to his point, and there was an end, for a time, to any prospect of adjustment. At last, in 1170, on the 22nd of July, a solemn meeting took place near Touraine. Under a bright summer sky, in a pleasant meadow, the king of England waited for the archbishop; and as the prelate advanced to the royal tent, Henry rode forward to meet him with vailed bonnet. They long discoursed apart; and to all appearance they were reconciled. But the king withheld "the kiss of peace"—that token of amity, which, originating in the pledges by the early Christians of their common affection, had a peculiar solemnity when given by the lips of a king in the feudal times.* Henry held Becket's stirrups when he mounted his horse, but he would not give him the kiss of peace. The archbishop was to be restored to his see, with all his lands, livings, and privileges; and Henry was content with Becket's agreement to love, honour and serve him, "in as far as an archbishop could render in the Lord service to his sovereign." But they parted without the kiss of peace. Becket anticipated danger, and he was repeatedly warned against going to England. This remarkable man, in the promptings of his enthusiasm, was lifted not only above all fear, but above all common discretion. Although

* The significance of the royal kiss lasted to our own days. At the period when the ministry of 1829 had resolved upon bringing forward the measure of Catholic Emancipation, and George IV. withheld his consent, the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel, upon leaving the royal closet, stating that they must resign, received each the kiss of the king.

Henry, it is alleged, had not sent him money for his journey, as was promised, he had certainly kept faith with him in essential matters. The eldest son of the king had been crowned, and acted in England with royal authority. To his son prince Henry, the king sent a brief letter, dated from Chinon, to this effect,—"Know you that Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, has made my peace, agreeably to my desire; and, therefore, I require that he and all of his following should have peace; and you will take care that the said archbishop, and that all of his people who on his account went out of England, should have their possessions truly, and in peace, and honourably, as they had them three months before the said archbishop went out of England."* Becket landed at Dover, on the 1st of December, 1170. He had previously sent before him letters of excommunication against the archbishop of York, and the bishops of London and Salisbury. The offence of these prelates was, that they had performed the ceremony of consecrating prince Henry, and had thus usurped an office pertaining to the see of Canterbury. This proceeding was a sufficient indication that there was to be no oblivion of the past, and no peace for the future. He proceeded to Canterbury, where he was received with acclamations by the burgesses and the poor. But none of the nobles or dignified ecclesiastics came to meet him. He attempted to see prince Henry, his former pupil, at Woodstock; but was directed to remain within his own diocese. How far Becket had brought this treatment upon himself by his own violation of the amnesty of the meeting of Touraine, or to what extent the king himself was insincere in the reconciliation, is a question which those only need argue who regard this passage of history as zealous partizans. Becket certainly rushed upon his fate. He was a man of such ardent temperament, that he preferred death to indignity. Amidst an escort of poor people he returned to Canterbury, and on Christmas-day preached in the cathedral, from the text, "I come to die amongst you;" and afterwards resorted to his old weapon of excommunication. He had been, no doubt, treated with rudeness; and, "after delivering a sermon to the people, excommunicated Robert de Broc, who, the day before, had cut off the tail of one of his sumpter-horses."† The prelates, against whom Becket had borne letters of excommunication, had crossed to Normandy, to represent their grievances to the king. It was not likely he would hear them patiently, and quietly submit to the domination of the imperious man who had thus re-opened the old quarrel. There is no evidence that Henry gave his sanction to assassination, but it is clear that in his passion he exclaimed, "Is there no one to deliver me from this turbulent priest?" Four knights of Henry's court—"whose names were as follows—William de Tracy, Hugh de Morville, Richard Brito, and Reginald Fitz-Urse, men of family, conspicuous for eminence,"‡ crossed the sea, and arrived at Canterbury on the fifth day of the Nativity. They made their way into the archbishop's chambers, and addressed him insolently. Threats were exchanged, and mutual revilings. The knights required the prelate to withdraw the excommunication of the bishops, and to do fealty to the king for his barony. John of Salisbury, his secretary, counselled peace. But Becket was unmoved by terror or by

* This letter, and many of the curious documents connected with this eventful story, are given in "Rymer's Fœdera," p. 26; ed. 1816.

† Hoveden. ‡ Hoveden.

entreaty. He was ready to meet the death which appeared to be impending. He took no precautions against outrage, but resolved to go to vespers in the cathedral. As he came from the conventual buildings into the cloister—perhaps descending from that beautiful staircase upon which the eye of the tasteful antiquary still gazes with delight—there was heard the tramp of armed men mingling with the slow tread of the monks. Quietly he proceeded into the church, and stood before the altar of St. Bennet. "Where is the

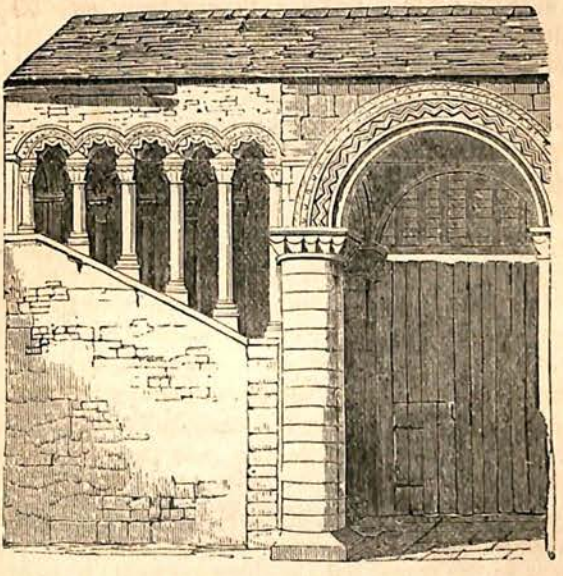
traitor? Where is the archbishop?" exclaimed Tracy. The courageous prelate answered, "Here am I, the archbishop, but no traitor." "Thou art a prisoner," said Tracy, and took him by the sleeve; but the old martial temper was roused, and the archbishop threw him off with violence. There are various accounts of Becket's deportment, some imputing to him the use of offensive language to his assailants, and others representing him as an angel of meekness. He refused to fly; or to make any submission. He was then struck at, and as the sword of Fitz-Urse was descending upon his head, his faithful cross-bearer, Edward Gryme, received the blow upon his arm

Becket was slightly wounded and fell. Another and another blow completed the murder.

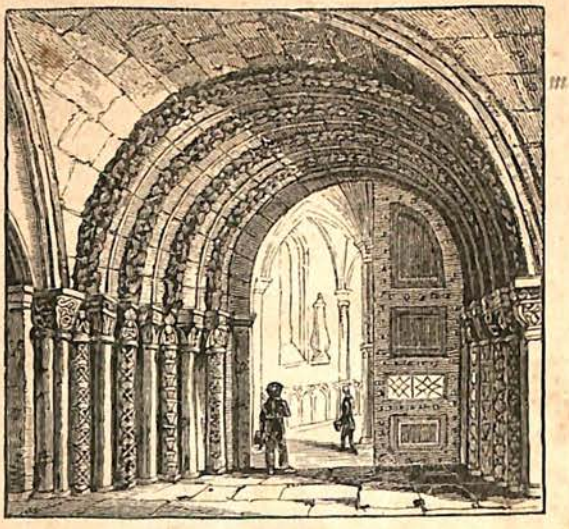
The cause for which Becket had contended, with such uncompromising zeal, was never so near its complete triumph as when his skull had been shattered upon the stone pavement of Canterbury cathedral. After that atrocious deed came the miraculous relations which, however we may now refer them to priestly imposture, were implicitly believed by the great body of the people. Then came the canonisation; the pilgrimages to the shrine of Saint Thomas; the humiliation of the king himself before the tomb of his enemy, terrible even in death. But had Becket been permitted to live, his fanaticism would have been displayed in forms of more offensive violence, until the learning, the moderation, and the genuine religion of the Church would have been wholly arrayed against him. As it was, several of the most able of Becket's fellow-prelates took part with the king in their great quarrel, particularly Gilbert Foliot, bishop of Hereford, and afterwards of London—one of the most accomplished scholars of his time. The more it became a personal contest between Henry and Becket, the more would the great statesman have subdued the passionate churchman to his will. For Henry was, unquestionably, one of those few men in the history of the world who have vindicated their claims to be the natural rulers of mankind. Becket, by his adroitness, his activity, his courage, was invaluable to Henry as his lay-minister; but, thrown upon his own resources, and tempted by his archiepiscopal elevation to challenge the regal power to a conflict for supremacy with the ecclesiastical, he became the fanatical upholder of one dominant idea. He must have been crushed in the contest, if it had been a mere intellectual battle between two men of ordinary ambition. Henry was in every mental quality of greatness the superior of Becket. He was not a man of shows, but of realities. Becket wore "coarse sackcloth made of goat's hair, from the arms to the knees, but his outer garments were remarkable for their splendour and extreme costliness, to the end that, thus deceiving human eyes, he might please the sight of God." Thus writes his panegyrist, Hoveden. Henry was utterly regardless of mere appearances. Though his passions were violent, and his private life open to reproach, he won the admiration of all who came in contact with him, by his talent and energy, by his affability and modesty, by his unremitting power of labour, by his knowledge of languages and of all graceful and useful learning, by his discernment in the enactment and administration of laws.* With many of the faults of his age, he had a sense of duty which raised him far above the mere selfish temptations of his position. Had Becket not been so wickedly and rashly slain by the rude knights who saw but one way of terminating so violent a contention, the king must have triumphed, and the claims of ecclesiastical tyranny must have been reduced to moderate dimensions at an earlier period of our history. But the victory of the crown might, at this time, have also retarded, for a long season, that enfranchisement of the Commons from the feudal oppressions which was slowly but steadily advancing. In such a con-

* See the character of Henry in the interesting Latin work "Gualteri Mapes de Nugis Curialium," published by the Camden Society, p. 227.

test as this, the claims of the lowly make some progress; and thus every humble pilgrim, whose knees wore the stones on which he knelt at the shrine of Saint Thomas, entered his protest against the reign of brute violence, and prepared the way for a time when piety might be separated from superstition, and freedom from disorder.



Staircase in the Conventual Buildings, Canterbury.



Porch of the Temple Church.

CHAPTER XXI.

First Landing of Anglo-Normans in Ireland—The Irish Nation—Strongbow—Henry in Ireland—Rebellion of Henry's Sons—Insurrection in England—Henry at the Tomb of Becket—Reforms in the Administration of Justice—Mission from Jerusalem—Rebellion of Richard—Death of King Henry—Coronation of Richard—Massacre of the Jews—Richard the Crusader—Progress of the Crusaders—Siege of Acre—Massacre of Hostages—March towards Jerusalem.

In the reign of Henry II. commenced that direct connection of Ireland with the government of England which has lasted nearly seven hundred years—a connection which has involved as much oppression and misrule, revolt and misery, as ever belonged to a struggle between races and creeds, of which the natural evils were always heightened and perpetuated by selfishness and ignorance on every side. In May, 1169, the first landing in Ireland of the Anglo-Normans took place. For several centuries the inhabitants of Ireland had made hostile descents on England, to take part in the various contests between Saxon and Briton. The Norman kings appear to have occasionally contemplated the subjection of Ireland; and William Rufus is stated to have looked from a high rock in Wales upon the green island in the distance, and to have said, "With my ships I will make a bridge to invade that land." Early in the reign of Henry, Pope Adrian had given him a pretended authority to subdue Ireland, and to reform its barbarous people. Before the ninth century the Irish had schools of learning which were celebrated throughout Europe, and the Celtic tribes were gradually acquiring a taste for the advantages of civilised life. But the incursions of the fierce Northmen drove the great bulk of the people into a condition of semi-barbarism, living apart from the settlements on the coasts in wild forests and dreary morasses. Giraldus Cambrensis has left a description of the nation, amongst whom he travelled

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in the train of prince John, which, with some allowance for the partiality of the Welchman for his own race, does not place the Irish much lower than the people of Wales which he described. They had the same internal contests under separate chiefs; the same preference of pasturage to agriculture; the same dislike of sedentary pursuits; the same excitable natures; the same impetuous bravery; and the same universal love of music. The rulers of this people were called kings, and there was a chief monarch who claimed the sovereignty over the whole island. There was no hereditary claim to a regular succession amongst the sons of these kings; but the "tanist," or heir-apparent, was elected by the voices of the "sept" during the life of the chieftain, who had also been so chosen. It was held that the choice should fall upon the worthiest; but sometimes there was none found worthy in the reigning family, and another branch was selected to supply the coming king. Perpetual battle and assassination, open violence or more dangerous treachery, were the inevitable results of "tanistry." The same contests prevailed as to inheritance. Lands descended to all the sons of a family in equal shares, whether these sons were legitimate or of spurious birth. But there was not only this division upon the death of the father, but upon the death of each possessor the lands were thrown into the common stock, and a new division was made. Under such a system no improvement could take place in the cultivation of the soil. There could be no accumulation of capital, and no profitable industry. The system, in all its deformity, lasted to the days of James I., and wherever it prevailed, the country "seemed to be all one wilderness." * Whether under this old system of "gavelkind," or under the cottier-system of later times, the minute subdivision of land, and the ferocious conflicts for its possession, have perpetuated evils through many generations of whose cure we are scarcely now beginning to have an assured hope.

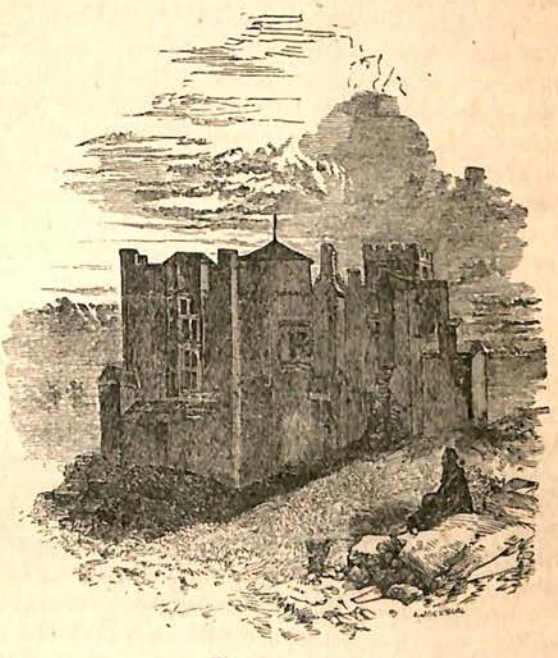
In the middle of the twelfth century, there were several independent provinces of Ireland, of which the MacCarthys, O'Briens, Mahons, O'Malachlins, O'Neills, O'Donalls, O'Connors, and others less famous, were kings. The nominal sovereignty was then claimed by the O'Connors, the kings of Connaught. There had been great agitation in the country since the time when Dermot, king of Leinster, had carried off the wife of O'Ruarc, prince of Leitrim; and after years of battle and vicissitudes of power, Dermot was driven out of the island in 1167. He went to Aquitaine, did homage to Henry, and obtained permission to enlist adventurers to recover his dominions. He obtained the aid of Richard de Clare, earl of Pembroke, surnamed Strongbow, and of two Welch brothers, Robert and Maurice Fitzgerald. The Welchmen landed first with a large company of knights and archers. Dermot joined them with his native adherents; and they gained victories, and perpetrated atrocious cruelties. The next year Strongbow came with large forces; and Dublin and Waterford were taken. Strongbow married Eva, the daughter of Dermot; but the native king died the same year, and the ambitious adventurer from England assumed the royal authority. Henry was not disposed to have an energetic rival quite so near his own dominions; and he forebade any more English to engage in the invasion, and commanded Strongbow and his adherents to return. The adventurer was alarmed, and hastened to lay his authority and acquired possessions at the feet of Henry,

* Sir John Davies, who wrote a political treatise on Ireland in that reign.

as his liege lord. The king of England proceeded himself to Ireland, with a disciplined and numerous band. He landed at Waterford and marched to Dublin, receiving the homage of native princes as he went forward. He committed no excesses, and received the chieftains with his politic cordiality. The princes of Ulster alone refused to bow to the authority of the English king. Henry returned to England in the spring of 1172. He had made no conquests; and his possession of the island, even as a feudal superior, was exceedingly precarious. But in 1175, Henry produced the bull of Pope Adrian, and claimed to be monarch of Ireland. He then granted to Roderic, king of Connaught, that he should be king under the English crown, over the other chieftains, tribute being paid by all to Henry. Strongbow, the king of Leinster, died in 1177. The same year the king obtained a papal bull, giving him power to enfeoff either of his sons with Ireland, as its lord; and he conferred that authority on prince John, then twelve years of age. The king, however, chose a sagacious lord-deputy, Hugh de Lacy; who laboured successfully to reconcile the people to the authority of the English strangers. He was recalled in 1185, and prince John, with a numerous force, proceeded to Ireland. As was his course through life, he disgusted those whom he should have conciliated; and his wanton insolence was even more hateful than his studied tyranny. His wise father placed the native chiefs at his own table, and propitiated them by the attentions of a chivalrous and elevated courtesy. The chiefs of Leinster came to acknowledge John as their lord, and he encouraged his silk-clad attendants to ridicule their homely dresses, and to pluck their bushy beards. Instead of loyalty the English now found revenge. The oppressions which this impolitic boy encouraged raised up enemies on every side; and after a perilous and contemptible rule of less than a year his father recalled him.

During his expedition to Ireland, Henry appears to have devoted himself entirely to the concerns of that new accession to his authority. He spent the Christmas of 1171 in Dublin. At the end of March, 1172, vessels arrived from England and Aquitaine; and he immediately resolved to leave the island. It is remarkable that for five months there had been no maritime communication from England or the continent. It is held that this suspension of intercourse was not accidental; and that the king prevented any vessel coming to disturb him with the announcement that the spiritual arm was uplifted against him on account of the murder of Becket. When the news of that catastrophe reached him in Normandy, he gave way to the most passionate grief, and sent envoys to Rome to declare his innocence, and to moderate the anger of Pope Alexander. After excommunicating the assassins, with all the advisers and abettors of Becket's death, Alexander sent two legates into France to investigate the whole circumstances of the unhappy affair. Henry immediately withdrew from Normandy, and in Ireland he waited the result. He went there, according to contemporary writers, to avoid a visit from the papal legates. At length an encouraging issue of five months' debate was announced to him; and then his characteristic vigour was displayed by his immediate presence in Normandy. "The king of England neither rides nor sails; he flies with the rapidity of a bird," said the king of France. Henry met the legates; solemnly swore in the cathedral of Avranches that he was innocent in word or deed of the murder of the archbishop; and was as solemnly absolved of all censure, upon agreeing to certain concessions in favour of the

Church, which had the effect of suspending the operations of the Constitutions of Clarendon. Henry was now in his fortieth year, perhaps with that touch of grey in his hair which Peter of Blois has described, but in the most perfect vigour of his powerful understanding and energetic will. He had four sons living—Henry, in his eighteenth year; Richard, in his fifteenth; Geoffrey, in his fourteenth; and John, in his sixth. These were the children of queen Eleanor. At this period Henry, it may be concluded, lived unhappily with the queen; for the romantic stories of Rosamund Clifford, and of the secret bower of Woodstock, where the enamoured king concealed his beautiful mistress from the revenge of his wife, have this much of fact in them, that William Longsword, earl of Salisbury, and Geoffrey, who became archbishop of York, were the sons of fair Rosamund, and Henry was their father. In 1172, some influence had been at work to produce a powerful confederacy against the great king of England; and in this confederacy queen Eleanor and her sons, Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey, were involved. The young Henry had been a second time crowned at Westminster, with his wife, the daughter of the king of France; and he was termed king, from this circumstance. It was not unusual, according to a custom of the French monarchy, to crown the heir-apparent. But prince Henry, at the instigation, it is believed, of his father-in-law, set up a pretension to divide the royal power with his father, and demanded that the king should resign to him either England or Normandy. In the same spirit, Richard, the boy of fifteen, claimed Aquitaine, because he had performed homage to Louis for that duchy; and the other boy of fourteen, Geoffrey, claimed the immediate possession of Brittany. The rebellious sons fled from the court of their father to the French king; and their mother soon followed. The bishops of Normandy exhorted her, under pain of ecclesiastical censure, to return with her sons. King Henry took a more effectual mode—he secured her person, and kept her in close durance for many years. This was something more than a domestic quarrel. Louis of France dreaded the great extent of Henry's possessions, and stood in awe of his talents. The people of Normandy, and Aquitaine, and Brittany,—and especially those of Aquitaine, of whom Eleanor was the duchess—were desirous of independence. By the people, we of course



Woodstock.

only mean those who had wealth and power. To the villans and the slaves it was of little consequence who governed them. To the young rebellious princes it appeared, as it has appeared to historians, that the struggle for inheritance was a mere personal question. Richard used to say that it was the birthright of their race to be at variance. But there was something more than this curse fated to rest upon the line of Plantagenet, as the old chroniclers believed. The power which the second Henry had acquired was too enormous to be long upheld. It would have fallen to pieces at once in the hands of a weak king. It was broken up, in less than a quarter of a century after his death, when a king came who was neither a warrior nor a statesman. To avert the severance of his vast dominions, Henry had need of all his great qualities. Louis of France bound himself, with the usual oaths, to aid the young Henry in his attempt to possess England; and the young Henry vowed never to make peace with his father, unless France should give consent. There were two other princes who became parties to this league—William, king of Scotland, and Philip, earl of Flanders. In England, there were discontented barons, whose oppressions were checked by a sovereign who had strenuously asserted the very disagreeable principle of legal justice. Henry collected an army of twenty thousand adventurers, soldiers of fortune, who were ready to support any cause that afforded pay and plunder. The allied enemies of the king entered Normandy; but they were repulsed. The Scots made incursions upon the north of England, but they were driven back by Richard de Lacy, the justiciary, and Humphrey de Bohun, the lord constable, who ravaged Lothian and burnt Berwick. Meanwhile, the earl of Leicester, who had taken part against the king, had brought over a large body of Flemings; and the force was joined by the earl of Norfolk, at Framlingham Castle. Near Saint Edmundsbury they were met by the army which had returned triumphantly from Scotland. The banner of Saint Edmund was carried in front of the royal army; and, at a marshy place called Fornham, on the bank of the river, the rebel forces were entirely defeated, and the earl of Leicester and his countess were taken prisoners. In 1826, at this place, beneath a pollard ash, a heap of skeletons was discovered, with marks of violence on several of the skulls. Jocelin de Brakelond begins his chronicle from the year 1173, "when the Flemings were taken, without the town."* The rebellious barons being thus defeated, many captives were sent to Henry in Normandy. In 1174, the rebellion became even more formidable. The Scots again entered England in great force. The insurrectionary standard

Eleanor, Queen of Henry II.
From the Tomb at Fontevraud.

* See the notes to Mr. Tomlins' translation, p. 41.

was raised in the northern, the midland, and the eastern counties. A fleet was ready at Gravelines to bring over the young Henry. But there was one, who whilst all around him seemed to be crumbling into ruin, stood as unshaken as in the days of his most joyous security. On the 8th July, the king took ship, and crossed the channel in a heavy storm. He was more than usually solemn during the long and difficult passage. His ordinary gaiety of heart was overclouded by deep thought. The man who had fallen dead at the shrine of Saint Bennet at Canterbury was now a canonised saint, at whose tomb miracles were wrought which noble and churl equally believed. On the 10th of July, Henry rode from Southampton during the night, and as he saw the cathedral towers of Canterbury looming in the grey dawn, he alighted, and walked in penitential garb barefoot to the city. He knelt at the tomb of Becket in deep humiliation. The bishop of London preached, and maintained that Henry had thus appealed to Heaven in avowal of his innocence of the guilt of blood. Then the great king, before the assembled monks and chapter, poured forth his contrition for the passionate exclamation which had been so rashly interpreted; and he was scourged with a knotted cord. He spent the night in the dark crypt, and the next day rode fasting to London. There he fell ill. But on the fifth night of his fever, a messenger came from Ranulf de Glanville. "Is Glanville well?" said the king. "He is well, and has now in his custody your enemy, the king of the Scots." On the morning when Henry was humiliating himself before the tomb of Becket, the Norman barons in the interest of the English king had ridden from Newcastle to Alnwick, and there surprised the king of Scotland, tilting in a meadow with sixty companions. He bravely set lance in rest to meet assailants who were in earnest; but at the first encounter his horse was killed, and he became a captive. The Scottish lords threw down their arms, and a long train of English knights and their prisoners marched the same evening into Newcastle. The insurrection was at an end in England. The army which Henry had sent to oppose the rebel lords was now turned against his rebel sons and Louis of France. In another month Henry had scattered or terrified all his enemies; and at the end of September there was peace.

The king of Scotland was confined for several months in the castle of Falaise. A deputation of Scottish nobles and prelates assembled in Normandy to advise their king; and he was finally liberated, after doing homage to Henry as liege lord, it being stipulated that the Scottish clergy and barons should also take an oath of fealty to the English king, and that certain castles in Scotland should be garrisoned by English. This treaty was ratified at York, in the succeeding year. Sir Walter Scott terms this acknowledgment of the king of England as lord paramount of the whole kingdom of Scotland —homage never before having been claimed except for Lothian—as "a miserable example of that impatience which too often characterised the Scottish counsels." * It was some time before Henry would receive the reconciling homage of his eldest son; but in 1175 they sailed to England in company, and lived in apparent cordiality together. Relieved of these pressing anxieties, the king again directed his mind to the better administration of his English dominions. In 1176, at a council at Northampton, he

* "History of Scotland," vol. i. p. 38.

divided the kingdom into six districts, each having three itinerant justices. The circuits of modern times do not greatly vary from these ancient divisions. It has been imputed to Henry that he established these courts of assize chiefly to bring money into his own exchequer.* That the revenues of the Crown would be increased by the power which these justices possessed of inquiring into wardships, lapsed lands, fines received from defaulters, and other matters connected with sovereign rights, cannot be doubted. The pleas of the Crown and of the forest afforded royal profit. The common pleas between subject and subject were also a source of pecuniary advantage to the treasury. But that the king and his chief-justiciary were desirous to judge righteously, and to compel others so to judge, we have some evidence. Peter of Blois, who always writes to the king with honest freedom, in one of his letters says, "If causes are tried in your highness's presence, or before your chief justice, there is no place for bribery or favour; all goes on equitably, and your sentences do not exceed, in the least degree, the bounds of moderation. But if a poor man's cause goes to the petty judges, the wicked is justified for his gifts, snares are laid for the poor, quibbles on syllables are practised, and word-catching." In the same letter he says, "Your justices in eyre, who are sent to check other men's faults, have a great many of their own. They hide men's crimes, from favour, or fear, or relationship, or for money." Henry did not allow these practices to remain unchecked. In three years after their appointment he removed all the justices in eyre, except Ranulf de Glanville, who, with five others, held assizes north of the Trent. He was subsequently appointed chief-justiciary. One of the most ancient treatises on English law bears the name of this judge, and contains some notices of trials held before him. In his preface, he maintains that at the period at which he writes, there was not in the king's court a judge who dared to swerve from the course of justice.

During the peace which Henry enjoyed for eight years after the suppression of the revolts of 1174, he devoted himself to the unremitting discharge of his civil duties. That tranquillity was not disturbed till 1183. In that year the unquiet Plantagenet blood was again asserting "the birthright of their race to be at variance." Henry, the eldest son, had been the foremost in every tournament; and Richard and Geoffrey were equally emulous of the fame of accomplished knights. In 1183, the king commanded Richard to do homage to his elder brother for Aquitaine. He refused; and Henry entered Richard's territory with an army. The father interposed, and apparently reconciled the sons. But new causes of quarrel arose; and then Henry and Geoffrey rebelled against the king. Into these quarrels, as obscure in their details as they are hateful in their principle, we have no desire to enter. Being about to give battle to his father, the young Henry fell ill; and then he became penitent. The king, always forgiving, sent him a ring as a token of his love, and the unhappy man died, pressing that token to his lips. Geoffrey was pardoned; but he then made new demands, and repaired to the court of Philip, now king of France, to excite new troubles. In 1186, he was thrown from his horse at a tournament, and died in a few days. Richard and John only remained, to show "how sharper than a serpent's tooth" is filial ingratitude.

* Lingard, vol. ii. p. 404.

Since the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, in 1099, the Christian kingdom had been upheld under six successors of the illustrious Godfrey. But a man had arisen who was destined to set a limit to the Latin dominion in the East, and to fill the chivalry of Europe with indignation at his triumphs. Saladin, undoubtedly entitled to the name of the great, was a humble soldier of the pastoral tribe of the Curds. He was born in 1137; but he became lord of Egypt, and "at the hour of his death his empire was spread from the African Tripoli to the Tigris, and from the Indian Ocean to the mountains of Armenia." * The decay of the kingdom of Jerusalem, amidst quarrels and treacheries, weakness and crime, at last became so full of peril to what was considered the cause of Christendom, that the kings of England and France were instigated solemnly to enrol themselves as defenders of Jerusalem. Louis of France died in 1180; and Henry of England was then released from their mutual obligation to visit the Holy Land. In England there were two powerful bodies especially sworn as defenders of the cross — the Knights Hospitallers, and the Knights Templars. In 1185, during a suspension of hostilities with Saladin, the patriarch of Jerusalem, Heraclius, arrived in England; and the church of the new house of the Templars in London was consecrated by him. In those quiet courts, now so changed, but looking out upon the same broad river, dwelt the prior, the knights, and the serving brethren of the great order of the Templars; and in that round church, which in late years has been restored to its primitive beauty, the chaplains of the community prayed for the fall of the infidel; and the knights who had fought against him were buried with monumental honour—as they were in other churches — distinguished by that singular attitude of the crossed legs, which denoted that the Holy Land had witnessed the performance of their sacred vows. Heraclius had a special mission in England. It was to urge King Henry, as the representative of Fulke of Anjou, whose descendants had been kings

A Knight Templar.

* Gibbon, vol. vii. p. 255.

of Jerusalem for half a century, to rescue the sacred city from the dangers by which she was threatened. Henry referred the question to his great council, —whether he should go to the East, for the defence of Palestine, or remain to govern the nations of which Heaven had given him the charge. The council decided wisely. The king remained: but he promised a large sum to assist those who were engaged in the sacred warfare. In 1187, Jerusalem was surrendered to Saladin. Then went forth deep lamentation throughout Europe. A pope died of grief. A king wore sackcloth. Other sovereigns trembled for the safety of their own possessions, under a possible invasion of the triumphant Mussulmans. In 1188 Henry proceeded to France, and he and Philip Augustus resolved to take the cross. He returned to England, and obtained an enormous tribute, of which nearly one-half was extorted from the Jews. Henry was bent upon a new field of enterprise. He was yet vigorous, though past the prime of life. But a suspicious friendship had arisen between Philip and Henry's son, Richard. The real causes of the troubles that ensued are not very manifest; but the disputes ended in Richard joining the French king in a war against his father. The projected crusade was necessarily suspended. Philip and Richard took his castles, whilst Henry remained in a condition of unusual supineness. He was now broken in spirit. He met the king of France in a plain near Tours, during a violent thunder-storm. His agitation was great. In his weakened health he yielded, almost without a struggle, to the demands which were made upon him. They were exorbitant; and put that proud heart wholly under subjection to the will of Philip, and that of his rebellious son Richard. Throughout these unnatural conflicts, he had rested his hopes upon his beloved John, to whom he had required his seneschal to deliver his castles in the event of his death, and who he had hoped might possess Normandy. On a sick-bed he signed the treaty. He had asked for the names of those barons who had joined the French king. The first name he saw was John. He read no more. The world and all its troubles and hopes faded from his view. He turned his face to the wall, and exclaimed, "Let every thing go as it will." He was then carried in a litter to his pleasant palace of Chinon, and there laid himself down to die. One only watched over him with real affection—his illegitimate son, Geoffrey. His great heart was broken. On the 6th July, 1189, Henry II. was no more.

Effigy of Templar, St. Mary Overies.

Roger de Hoveden, who writes of these events as a contemporary authority, thus speaks of the demeanour of Richard at the burial of his father: "On the day after his death, when he was being carried out for burial in the Church of the Nuns at Fontevraud, earl Richard, his son and heir, came to meet him, and, smitten with compunction, wept bitterly." He adds,—in the belief of that age that the body of the murdered bled at

the presence of the murderer,—"immediately on which, the blood flowed in streams from the nostrils of the body, at the approach of his son." This is at least an indication of the common opinion as to the conduct of Richard. His remorse, or his deference to that opinion, produced an unexpected result: "All the persons, clergy as well as laity, who, leaving his father, had adhered to himself, he held in abhorrence, and banished from his acquaintanceship; while those who had faithfully served his father, he retained with him, and enriched with numerous benefits."

Richard was crowned king of England, at Westminster, on the 3rd of September, 1189. During the interval of two months from his father's death his mother, Eleanor, had exercised some administrative powers; and had ordered the liberation of all prisoners, "for the good of the soul of Henry, her lord, inasmuch as, in her own person, she had learnt by experience, that confinement is distasteful to mankind."* At the coronation of Richard there was more than usual magnificence. The golden spurs, the sceptre, the rod with the dove, the great and massive crown decorated with precious stones, were carried by earls; and then Richard, duke of Normandy, walked between

Great Seal of Richard; Reverse.

the bishop of Durham and the bishop of Bath, four barons holding over them a canopy of silk. With a great company of earls, barons, and knights, proceeding to the altar, Richard swore to observe peace, honour, and reverence towards the Holy Church, and to exercise true justice and equity towards the people committed to his charge. After the gorgeous ceremonies of the coronation, the crowned king went to dine, with archbishops and bishops at his table, and earls and barons waiting on him, and citizens of London serving in his cellar, and those of Winchester in his kitchen. Then, the chief men of the Jews came to offer presents to the king. They

* Hoveden.

had been forbidden to come, but they came with gifts, and they were therefore bold. The common people, according to the chronicler, rushed upon the Jews, stripped them, and cast them forth out of the king's hall, with wounds and blows. The citizens of London, following the example, attacked and murdered the Jews in the city, and burnt their houses. Some of the offenders were hanged, by the king's command. But, not altogether in that spirit of justice in which he had sworn to govern, he punished the rioters, "not for the sake of the Jews, but on account of the houses and property of the Christians which they had burnt and plundered." * Under Henry II. the Jews had only been robbed. They were the great accumulators of property, as lenders of money; and all the general hatred against those who took interest, or use, for money, was increased by the vulgar prejudices against this unhappy people, to whom all hateful opinions were ascribed, and who were universally believed to be cruel murderers of innocent children, as well as rapacious plunderers of insolvent barons. After the riot of London, the spirit of persecution went through the kingdom; and the Jews were barbarously treated and atrociously massacred in many a town. The crusade was resolved upon. Richard, and Philip of France, had agreed to proceed to the Holy Land, after the Easter of 1190. Large bodies of crusaders were gathering in England; and, as they marched to the coast for embarkation, they exhibited the Christian spirit in which they proceeded upon their adventures, by inciting the people to plunder and murder the Israelites. At York, this persecuted race exhibited a sublime heroism, which could only have been inspired by the solemn remembrance of the faith and courage of the ancient children of Zion. A body of armed men entered the city, and commenced their work of plunder and massacre, by attacking the house of a Jew who had perished in the riot of London. All the Jews of York then claimed shelter in the castle. They were admitted, to the number of five hundred. The governor went away; and, upon his return, the Jews, alarmed for their safety, refused him re-admission. The fortress was attacked on all sides, and ransoms were refused. Then the desperate race, all except a few, put their wives and children to death, and stabbed each other, that they might not fall into the hands of their cruel enemies. The few who shrank from this terrible self-sacrifice were murdered. The Jews had deposited their bonds with the officers of the cathedral; but the authors of this catastrophe obtained possession of these documents, and burnt them in the nave of the church. One great object of the persecution was accomplished. A load of debt was wiped off the estates of many a servant of the Cross, by the destruction of his victims, and, with them, the evidence of his own obligations was destroyed. Dr. Lingard writes, "In narrating so many horrors, it is a consolation to find them uniformly reprobated by the historians of the time." † Has Dr. Lingard overlooked Richard of Devizes, who, in a few sentences, exhibits the horrible fanaticism with which the monkish chroniclers too often spoke of the remnant of the Israelites? This Carthusian says, "A sacrifice of the Jews to their father the devil was commenced in the city of London, and so long was the duration of this famous mystery, that the holocaust could scarcely be accomplished the ensuing day. The other cities and towns emulated the faith of the Londoners."

* Hoveden.

† History, vol. ii., 8vo, p. 447.

In the blasphemous words which follow, he calls the murdered people "blood-suckers."

Under such auspices was the third crusade commenced. Richard, whom the monk of Devizes calls "a king worthy of the name of king," exhibited his royal spirit in one universal swoop of extortion and corruption, to raise money for his great adventure in the East. In his father's treasury he found a hundred thousand marks; but this sum was a trifle for his extravagant purposes. He put up the crown demesnes for sale. He sold the public offices. He sold earldoms. He sold the claim which Henry had asserted to the right of homage for the crown of Scotland. He had no shame in thus degrading the king for the ambition of the crusader. "I would sell London, if I could find a chapman," he exclaimed. "Richard's presence-chamber was a market overt, in which all that the king could bestow—all that could be derived from the bounty of the crown or imparted by the royal prerogative,—was disposed of to the best chapman." * When this wholesale dealer returned, after an absence of four years, he forcibly resumed the lands which he had sold, and turned out the officers who had purchased their places. "His generosity and his virtuous endowments," says an enthusiastic chronicler of the crusades, "the ruler of the world should have given to ancient times." † From the hour when William I. set his foot on the shores of Pevensey, there was not one of the Norman race who manifested so much indifference for the real duties of a king, knew so little of England, regarded it so wholly as a country to plunder, was so entirely absorbed by personal motives, as this "lion-hearted" Richard. He had one large, passionate idea, which he carried out with surpassing bravery, and with the loftiest contempt of danger and privation. But in this rash and proud warrior, we see little of a wise ruler, and nothing of a patriotic ruler of England. He was Richard of Normandy. In the enterprise of the Crusades, he could not lead his island soldiers without making their prowess, as well as his own, famous. But he was the unconscious instrument of a more lasting good. By his prodigal expenditure, and his destruction of life, in objects that were in very small degree national, he advanced the time when England would become a nation, without sympathy for Norman dukes; and, self-reliant, without the encumbered dominion of the jarring feudatories of France.

Geoffrey de Vinsauf has described Richard as tall of stature; in figure graceful; his hair between red and auburn; his arms and legs long; his strength exceeding all men. The same interesting chronicler records a discourse, in 1192, between the bishop of Salisbury and Saladin, in which the bishop extols Richard's valour and liberality. The discreet Saladin, in acknowledging Richard's chivalric honour and bravery, said, that he would rather have wealth, with wisdom and moderation, than display immoderate valour and rashness. Taking "wealth" in the sense in which Saladin used it, Saladin is the civilised statesman in his views, and Richard the fighting barbarian. By the aid of the troubadours, Richard has been installed in ancient romance as the great hero of chivalry. In later times we have been compelled to sympathise with the "black knight" of "Ivanhoe," and the "lion-heart" of "The Talisman."

* Sir F. Palgrave, "Introduction to Rotuli Curiæ Regis."

† "Geoffrey de Vinsauf's Itinerary of Richard I. to the Holy Land," p. 155. Bohn's edit.

But we must read history with other eyes; and, with all love and veneration for the great novelist, we must presume to doubt whether the name of Richard is, or ought to be, "so dear to Englishmen" as Scott implies.* It will be convenient rapidly to follow the narratives of the third crusade for a little while, without interrupting the story by reference to the internal condition of England.

It was midsummer in 1190, before Richard and Philip set out on their great expedition. Richard proceeded from Tours, Philip from Paris. They met at Vezelay, and thence marched to Lyons. The arrowy Rhone was with difficulty crossed. The pavilions of the associated armies were at length pitched in the meadows on its bank. The leaders and their followers here separated. Richard took the road to Marseilles. His fleet had not appeared. His impatience drove him onward; and he left his army, coasting along the Italian shores, till he reached Messina. His fleet was there before him. At Messina he engaged in a quarrel with the prince and the people. The king of France, who had arrived before Richard, wisely kept aloof from these differences. It was Richard's personal quarrel about the dower of his sister; and it was at last ended by the payment of forty thousand ounces of gold by Tancred, the king of Sicily, and by the betrothal of Arthur of Bretagne, the nephew of Richard, to the daughter of the Sicilian king. From this period Philip Augustus saw in Richard the haughty assertor of his private interests; and he devoted himself to the advancement of his own rival interests, which finally expelled the kings of England from Normandy.

Richard, the crusader, has been, as yet, a long while absent from the scenes of the crusades. He waits at Messina, in company with the French king. The followers of both leaders complain of the individual cost of this strange delay. Richard offers to advance money to all who are in want. He gives Philip a half of the large sum that he had raised from the king of Sicily. But they have a quarrel about matrimonial projects. Adelais, sister to the king of France, was in some manner betrothed to Richard: but Richard now refuses her, and proffers his hand to Berengaria, daughter of the king of Navarre. The difference is reconciled by money, and Philip departs for Syria. Richard's mother and bride arrive at Messina. The Holy Land was within a few days' sail; but, after he leaves Sicily, he is engaged in another

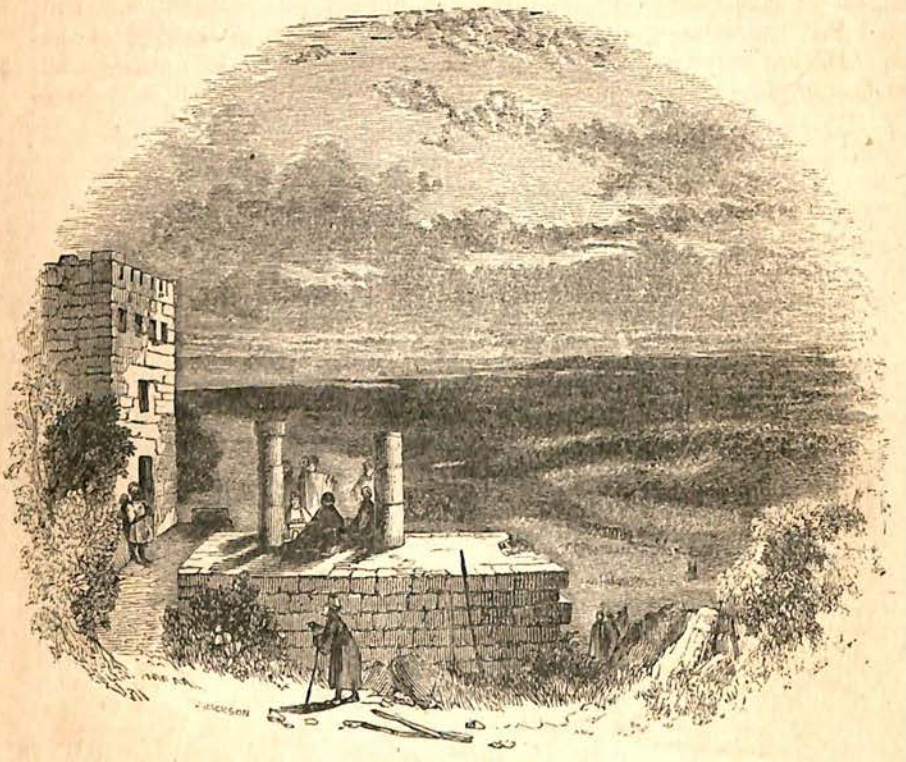
* Preface to "The Talisman."

episode of war, before he reaches his destination. Some of his vessels had been stranded at Cyprus, and had been subjected to that barbarous inhospitality which was not uncommon in those times. Richard is ardent for revenge. He engages in a contest with Isaac, emperor of Cyprus; subjects him to a heavy tribute; binds him "in silver chains," and keeps him in captivity till he is released by death. The conquest of Cyprus was useful to the crusaders; and Richard exhibited, perhaps unconsciously, some of the policy of a wise commander in his attack upon it. At Lymasol, in Cyprus, Richard married Berengaria.

Berengaria, Queen of Richard I. From the Tomb at Fontevrault.

Richard at length set sail from Cyprus, on the 5th of June, 1191. A year had nearly passed since he and Philip had met on the plains of Vezelay. During that period, and for a year previous, Acre had been in vain besieged by the Christian host. On his voyage, Richard fell in with an enormous galley, bearing ammunition and stores for the relief of Acre. As his smaller vessels attacked the great Saracen dromond, as it was called, the Greek fire, that terrible liquid flame which was unknown to Richard's men, was poured down upon them from the high deck; and they would have been beaten off but for Richard's threat—"I will crucify all my soldiers if she is not taken." The vessel, with many hundred men, was at length sunk. As the English fleet approached Acre, Richard gazed upon the high tower of the city, and then the smaller fortresses showed him their formidable fronts. There he saw the Christian hosts encamped in the plain; but on the distant hills, beyond the besiegers, was the mighty army of Saladin, whose standard waved amongst innumerable tents, the bright colours of his pavilions glittering in that summer sun. As Richard landed, a shout of joy went up from the crusaders' camp, with the clang of trumpets, and the loud chorus of national songs; and the night was passed in dance and revelry, amidst an illumination of waxen torches which lighted up the whole valley. The English king having heard that the king of France had made liberal donations to his soldiers, proclaimed a higher rate of pay for every one in his service, of whatever nation. But an intermitting fever checked his activity, and he waited for the arrival of some more men from England. Philip led his troops to an assault of the city, and was repulsed. As Richard regained his strength the attacks were more vigorous. The battering-ram was brought up to shake the massive walls; and amidst its heavy strokes, the Turks shouted, and filled the air with the noise of their gongs, so that Saladin, on the distant hills, should hear the signal, and come to their relief. The crusaders had to assail the city, and to defend themselves. Day by day there were desperate battles in the trenches. But still the siege

went on. The Greek fire was rained from the walls of Acre on the besiegers; and the besiegers cast large stones amongst the besieged from their cumbrous machines. It is amusing in these our days of the mightiest artillery, to read in the chronicles of those times of the feeble operations of the petraria, the balista, and the mangonel. The king of France had a petraria, for casting



The Plain of Acre.

large stones, which the Turks called "Bad Neighbour;" and with one which they called "Bad Kinsman," they often broke "Bad Neighbour" to pieces. There was another engine called "the petraria of God," by which a priest constantly preached, and exhorted the bringers of stone and the engineers, to persevere in their holy labours. All the various machines were plied night and day. But more formidable than the mangonels of Richard, which hurled stones even to the inner rows of the city market-place, or his scorpions, which sent their long arrows to the distant battlements, was the approach of famine. Saladin could not penetrate the lines of the Crusaders to supply the brave defenders of Acre with new stores. After long negotiation it was agreed that the city should be surrendered, a certain portion of the garrison being left as hostages, for the performance of the conditions of capitulation, the most important in the eyes of the Crusaders being, that Saladin should restore the Holy Cross. The Turks were also to pay a large sum of money, and set at liberty fifteen hundred

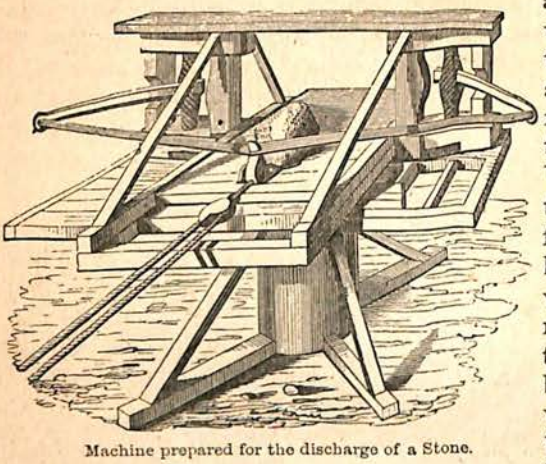
Christian captives. During the siege, the loss of human life was enormous. Geoffrey de Vinsauf estimates that three hundred thousand Christians perished from the time of its commencement to the surrender of the city.

Philip of France, after the capture of Acre, resolved to return home. A furious bigot, who had, in the beginning of his reign, banished every one from his dominions who dared to gainsay the laws of the Church, he was yet the craftiest of politicians. He had measured himself with Richard, and had found that the subtlety of the fox might be as effectual as the rage of the lion. He had borne indignities from him. He was jealous that amongst all the host of the Crusaders, "there was not of him a word, but all of Richard

the king." * He had his own schemes to pursue in the absence of Richard from his continental dominions. The duke of Normandy bound his feudal superior by the customary oaths, not to make war upon his territories, while he was not there to defend them; and the king of France left ten thousand soldiers under the command of Richard. But they parted in anger and mutual hatred. The Crusaders regarded Philip as a deserter. If he had remained, perhaps his policy, if not his religion, might have saved the Christian character from the eternal disgrace of one of the atrocities of the "lion-hearted." We shall not trust ourselves to narrate this crowning horror of the siege of Acre, in any other words than in those of the chronicler, Geoffrey de Vinsauf, who was himself a crusader. Saladin had delayed to restore the cross, within the time agreed; and he had asked further time. "When it became

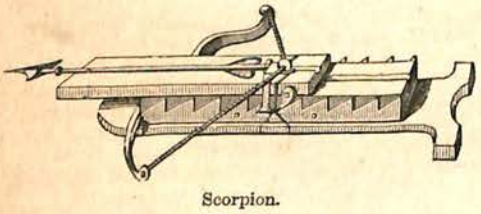
* Robert of Gloucester.

clearly evident to king Richard that a longer period had elapsed than had been fixed, and that Saladin was obdurate, and would not give himself trouble to ransom the hostages, he called together a council of the chiefs of the people, by whom it was resolved that the hostages should all be hanged, except a few nobles of the higher class, who might ransom themselves, or be exchanged for some Christian captives. King Richard, aspiring to "destroy the Turks root and branch, and to punish their wanton arrogance, as well as to abolish the law of Mahomet, and to vindicate the Christian religion, on the Friday after the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary, ordered 2700 of the Turkish hostages to be led forth from the city and hanged; his soldiers marched forward with delight to fulfil his commands, and to retaliate, with the assent of the Divine Grace, by taking revenge upon those who had destroyed so many of the Christians with missiles from bows and arbalasts."



Machine prepared for the discharge of a Stone.

In the guilt of Richard, the duke of Burgundy participated, by massacring the prisoners which had been taken under the banner of France. Saladin retaliated by the decapitation of his Christian prisoners. After this mutual slaughter, Richard led his army, now reduced to thirty thousand men, by the line of the coast to Jaffa. They marched, as in the time of king Stephen, with a high standard on a waggon. Pack-horses and loaded wains went slowly on by this difficult path on the side of the sea; and the Saracens, who hovered round their march, often attacked the troops and plundered the baggage. The Crusaders were moving on amidst sacred localities, and Capernaum and Cæsarea were familiar names, at least to the priests who marched with them. At night-fall, before the soldiers lay down to rest, a voice was heard in the middle of the camp, crying, "Help! help! for the holy sepulchre!" Then the whole army took up the words; and the herald again and again repeated them, and the men again and again cried, "Help! help! for the holy sepulchre!" During the night they were stung by venomous reptiles; and when again on their march, the troops of the indefatigable Saladin hovered around them—Turks and Bedouins—darkening the air with their showers of arrows. "The strength of all paganism," says Visnauf, "had gathered together from Damascus to Persia, from the Mediterranean to the East."



Scorpion.

Richard in Battle.

CHAPTER XXII.

Victory of Richard over Saladin—News from England—Deposition of the Chancellor Longchamp—Folk-mote in London—Assassination of the Marquis of Montferrat—Last Campaign for the Recovery of Jerusalem—Richard retreats—Battle of Jaffa—Truce; and Death of Saladin—Captivity of Richard—Prince John's Proceedings in England—Release of the King—Condition of the English People—William Fitz-Osbert—Oppression of the Poor by the Civic Authorities of London—The Cities and Great Towns—The Outlaws of the Forests—The Troubadours and the Ballad-singers—The Industrious Classes—Sports—Richard, the King, leaves England—His Wars in Normandy—Richard's Last Fight—His Death.

A MOST signal victory was obtained by Richard over Saladin, on the 7th of September, 1191, which is briefly described in a letter of the king to the abbot of Clairval: "Our vanguard having gone before and pitched their tents at Assur, Saladin with a mighty host of Saracens made an attack upon our rear-guard; on which, by the favouring grace of the Divine mercy, he was put to flight by only four battalions who faced about against him, and for a whole league was pursued in his flight by the entire troop of the Christians; in consequence of which, such a slaughter took place of the more noble Saracens whom Saladin had with him, namely, in the vicinity of Assur, on the vigil of the Nativity of Saint Mary the Virgin, being Saturday, that Saladin had experienced none like thereto on any one day in the preceding

forty years." * Vinsauf is rapturous in admiration of the prowess of "the king, the fierce, the extraordinary king," who, on this day, "wherever he turned, brandishing his sword, carved a wide path for himself." In pitched fight, or in sudden skirmish, Richard was always foremost.

The "Melech Ric," as the Turks called him, was as rash as he was dauntless. He goes hawking, leaving the line of his march, with a small escort; falls asleep on the ground; and is only saved from captivity by one of his companions, with the true heart of a noble soldier, calling out, "I am the Melech," and so surrendered himself.† Richard was constantly exhorted to be more careful; but, says Vinsauf, "the king's nature still broke out." Jaffa was reached, and its walls were rebuilt. Again the Christian host marched forward, in the hope of reaching Jerusalem. They had halted long at Jaffa. They were within thirty miles of the Holy City, and Richard was eager for advance. The Templars and Hospitallers, who knew the country, endeavoured to dissuade him from the perilous enterprise; for the armies of Saladin were in every pass of the mountains. But the king went on. The rains set in; provisions failed; sickness daily thinned the reduced ranks; the Christians lost heart. Richard had the prudence to return, retreating rapidly to Ascalon. This strong place had been dismantled by the Saracens, and the Crusaders found its walls and gates but a heap of stones. They vigorously applied themselves to the labour of rebuilding the fortress. "All engaged in the work—princes, nobles, knights, esquires, clerks, and laymen," says Vinsauf. Richard's strong arm, and more influential purse, were always ready. But there was disunion and jealousy in the crusading ranks. Richard is indifferent to the anger of the duke of Austria, or the desertion of the duke of Burgundy. Saphadin, the brother of Saladin, has interviews with him; and Richard "girds with the belt of knighthood the son of Saphadin." The courtesies of chivalry are exchanged between Christian and Pagan. As warriors, Richard and Saladin have learnt to appreciate each other. But the wise unbeliever knows that all the courage and all the magnificence of the "Melech Ric" will fail him in the end; and that the Christian alliance is harmless, when set against his own concentrated power. The great leader of the crusade is even shaken in his determination to recover Jerusalem. In that spring of 1192 Richard is depressed and irresolute. The prior of Hereford has brought news from England.

The news which Richard receives is not of an exhilarating nature. He has some interest in England, although he was never but once in the country, and then stayed only four months. But it is a great treasure-house of money, and a great hive of men. His brother John is playing him false. He perambulated the kingdom, courting popularity, as soon as Richard was fairly on his way to Palestine. His followers called him the king's heir. He had received homage for the royal castle of Lincoln. Richard had entrusted him with no authority; but had placed the government of the country in the hands of William de Longchamp, the chancellor,—who was also bishop of Ely,—in association with the bishop of Durham. Longchamp, a native of Beauvais, is represented under very different aspects by two of his contem-

* This letter is given by Hoveden.

† Richard did common justice to his faithful follower, by redeeming him at the price of the ransom of ten noble Turks, before he left Palestine.

poraries. Hugh, bishop of Coventry, describes him as a grasping priest, who, "slighting the English nation on all occasions, attended by a troop of Franks and Flemings, moved pompously along, bearing a sneer in his nostrils, a grin in his features, derision in his eyes, and superciliousness on his brow." This prelate adds, that "Longchamp and his revellers had so exhausted the whole kingdom, that they did not leave a man his belt, a woman her necklace, a nobleman his ring, or anything of value even to a Jew." On the other hand, Peter of Blois describes Longchamp as "a man amiable, wise, generous, kind, and meek; bounteous and liberal to the highest degree." * There were evidently two parties in the kingdom, one of which clung to the chancellor, and the other to Prince John. At last, a solemn meeting was held in London, which is of more historical importance than the characters or actions of these ambitious rivals. At that meeting a sentence of removal and banishment was passed upon the chancellor; and his high powers of regent and justiciary, conferred upon him by the king, were revoked. "It was a remarkable assumption of power by that assembly, and the earliest authority for a leading principle of our constitution, the responsibility of ministers to parliament." † The most striking account of these proceedings is given by Richard of Devizes. On the 8th of October, 1191, Prince John had arrived in London at night, and was joyfully received by the citizens with lanterns and torches. On the 9th there was a great assembly of nobles and prelates in St. Paul's Church, at which Geoffrey, archbishop of York, whose landing in England had been resisted by the chancellor, preferred heavy complaints against him. Prince John warmly espoused the quarrel of his illegitimate brother; and the assembly finally deposed the chancellor, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." John was then elected chief justiciary of the whole kingdom. There was another meeting on the 10th, which offers a curious picture of the participation of a large body of the people in state deliberations: "The sun having now appeared, the earl (John), with his noble troop, withdrew to the open field which is without London, towards the east; the chancellor went thither also, but less early than his adversaries. The nobles took the centre, around whom was next a circle of citizens, and beyond an attentive populace, estimated at ten thousand men." There was much speaking. The chancellor was overthrown; and the citizens of London swore fealty to John, against all men, saving always their fealty to king Richard. This meeting of the great body of the citizens, in co-operation with the nobles and prelates who had assembled on the previous day in St. Paul's Church, was, we may believe, what before the conquest was called a folk-mote—a people-meeting. In the struggle between Henry III. and the barons, there was a great folk-mote at Paul's Cross; and that people-meeting is not spoken of as if it had been new to that time. The popular voice had, however feebly, contrived to make itself heard, from the Saxon days; and out of these rude beginnings arose, in gradual development, the perfect idea of a representative system of government, in which the body of the people should assert their rights to consideration, without the partialities of a mere privileged assembly, or the tumultuous impulses of an indiscriminate gathering of excited masses.

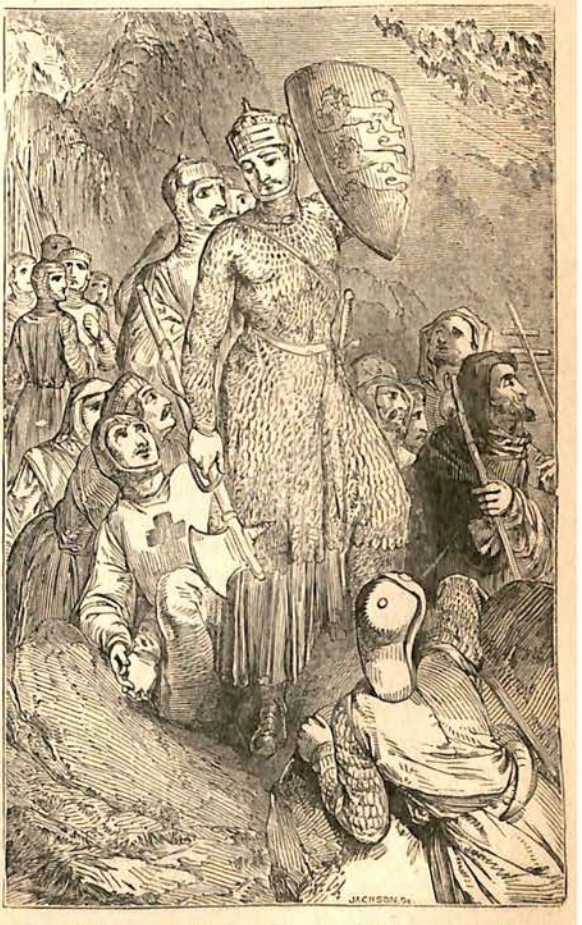
* The curious letters in which these conflicting descriptions occur are given by Hoveden.
† Hallam, "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 325.

We leave Prince John to pursue his political triumph. There are some curious pictures of society in the bishop of Coventry's sarcastic narrative of the escape of William de Longchamp from the popular fury at Dover. The deposed chancellor, who it appears was lame, walked down from the heights of the castle to the beach, disguised in a woman's green gown of inconvenient length, having some brown cloth in his hand, as if for sale, and carrying a measuring rod. He sits upon a rock on the shore, and a fisherman is rude to the supposed lady. A woman comes up, and asks the price of an ell of cloth, to which the unhappy chancellor can give no answer, for he understands not a word of English. Other women gather about him, and, having pulled off his hood, beheld a swarthy man, recently shaved. He is then rabbled, and dragged through the town, the men and women crying, "Come, let us stone this monster, who is a disgrace to either sex." Thrown into prison, the chancellor is at length liberated by an order from Prince John; takes ship; and lands in Flanders. From king Richard he demands redress; to whom he writes, that his brother John had taken possession of the kingdom, and would place the crown on his own head, unless the king should return with all speed. The Pope espoused the cause of Longchamp; and John, having had offers of bribes from him, made efforts for his recal. But the papal bull and the ex-chancellor's purse were equally ineffectual; and the fallen man sat down in Normandy to wait for the time when Richard should take thought of the people whom he had left to the mis-government of faction, or the no-government of anarchy.

Richard, who, whatever were his faults, was too brave to resort to the cowardly guilt of conspiring to put to death one whom he disliked, had at this time his honour blackened by an imputation that he was concerned in the murder of Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat. The king of England had opposed his claim to the sovereignty of Jerusalem, and had supported Guy of Lusignan. Some of the fatal dissensions amongst the Christian leaders arose out of these rival ambitions. The marquis was at length chosen king of Jerusalem, Richard having abandoned his opposition. Shortly after, Conrad was murdered in the streets of Tyre. One of the two young men who had stabbed him confessed that they were sent to do this deed by the chief commonly known as The Old Man of the Mountain. The history of the sects called The Assassins,—from whose fanatical crimes the word Assassin has found a place in European languages,—would appear to belong to the wildest romance, if modern times had not exhibited something of the same character in the Thugs of India. These assassins had possession of many hill-forts in Syria; and from their colony of Mount Libanus went forth the secret ministers of the revenge or the avarice of their Scheik, to whom his followers vowed a blind obedience. From their earliest youth, the chosen instruments of this Scheik were trained to believe that his commands were those of a divinity; and that if they fell in the discharge of the duties assigned them, all the joys of paradise would be their reward. In every variety of disguise these missionaries of the dagger found their way to the courts of princes, in the East and in the West; and Christian and Mussulman equally dreaded the danger against which no vigilance could guard. Richard was accused of having bribed the Scheik to the murder of Conrad; and the Scheik, in two letters, vindicated the king from any participation in what the fanatic avowed as his just revenge for an

injury sustained by one of his people: "He justly perished, by our will and command, by our satellites, for that act in which he transgressed against us, and which, when admonished, he had neglected to amend." These letters were produced in Richard's behalf, when he was solemnly accused as the instigator of the crime. He was also accused of having endeavoured to procure a similar murder of Philip of France, which is also denied in this evidence of the Scheik. The historian of the Assassins, Von Hammer, doubts the genuineness of these letters. But the account given in them of the reasons for the murder of Conrad is, we agree, "the least objectionable, the most consonant to Eastern manners, and, as the most simple, the most unlikely to have been invented." *

The spring of 1192 had set in, "after the cold winter months, and King Richard began again to attack the Turks with indefatigable ardour." Thus Vinsauf begins his narrative of the last eastern campaign of Cœur de Lion. Single-handed he destroys innumerable Saracens. Single-handed, with his lance for a hunting-spear, he attacks and kills an enormous boar. The crusaders are marching a second time upon Jerusalem. Richard is disturbed in spirit about England; and the report goes through the armies that he is about to leave the scene of so many of his gallant exploits. But all the leaders agree to advance, with or without Richard. The king sits alone in his tent, in sullen meditation. His chaplain, William of Poitou, approaches him with tears; and, being commanded to speak, exhorts him to continue to be the chief in the great enterprise. "The king's heart," says Vinsauf, "was changed by this address;" and his herald proclaimed to the army "that the king would not depart from the Holy Land before Easter." They march on; but there is a long rest again in a valley, from whose surrounding hills Richard



* Mackintosh, History, vol. i. p. 187. See the letters in "Secret Societies of the Middle Ages."

gazes upon Jerusalem. But he does not advance. He has become prudent, and will not take the responsibility of a hazardous attempt. Saladin, he says, "is aware of our precise strength, and that we are so distant from the sea-coast, that if the enemy were to come down with force from the mountains to the plain of Ramula, to watch the roads, and block up the passage, against those who convey our provisions, the consequence would be most disastrous." * The matter was now referred to twenty discreet men, who agreed that it was the most eligible plan to proceed direct to the siege of Babylon. The French were violently against this proposal. The army was put into good humour by the capture of an enormous caravan by Richard and a select band of his

Caravan.

own soldiers, and of the French. This prize was not obtained without a severe battle. But the luxuries of the East were poured into the laps of the captors —gold and silver, silks, spices, robes, cushions, pavilions, sugar, wax; besides the most useful necessaries of bread, meat, and grain. Vinsauf records that four thousand seven hundred camels and dromedaries, besides mules out of number, were left by the slaughtered or fugitive Turks.

But, however Richard might be delighted with the battle and the spoil, the avowed objects of the crusade were advancing slowly. The people began to murmur. The "twenty discreet men" now said that the enterprise of besieging Jerusalem was become more difficult; for, except the stream of Siloah, not a drop of water fit for drink could be found within two miles of the city. To the indecision of Richard the French imputed these delays. Even seven hundred years ago, commanders who failed to satisfy the popular impatience had to bear those keen assaults of ridicule which are more easily borne now when they are universal. There were minstrels in the French camp; and, at the instance of the duke of Burgundy, men and women went about singing a scurrilous ballad against the king of England. "On this composition becoming current amongst the soldiers," says Vinsauf, "king Richard was much annoyed." But king Richard here acted with more real heroism than when he brought back the heads of a dozen Turks who had fallen in his way. "King Richard was much annoyed; but he thought that a similar effusion would be the best mode of revenging himself on the authors, and he had not much difficulty in composing it, as there were abundance of materials." He was grown wiser since he kicked the duke of Austria, when he refused to work on the walls of Ascalon. At last, Saladin, knowing the distracted state of the Christian councils, refused to agree to a truce; and Richard retreated in the direction of Jaffa, and thence proceeded to Acre, with a part of his forces. Saladin now assaulted Jaffa with petraria and mangonel; and captured the town after a great slaughter. Richard was preparing to embark at Acre, when the news arrived of the siege of Jaffa.

* Vinsauf.

At the first words of messengers from the besieged, Richard determined to go to the relief of the Christians in the citadel. The French refused to be again under his command; but the Templars and Hospitallers, with soldiers of all nations, retraced their steps; and Richard embarked with many knights in his fleet of galleys, and arrived after some delay in the harbour of Jaffa. He found the citadel surrendered to the Turks. But the king, without waiting for the land-forces, threw himself into the water, and with a small band of followers recovered the castle. He then boldly encamped outside the gates, having amongst his two thousand men only ten who were mounted. A great body of Turkish cavalry attacked this small force of bowmen and spearmen. Their ranks were unbroken by the clouds of horse; for the spearmen fixed the butts of their lances in the sandy earth, and with the pointed shafts made a fence of steel against the light-armed Turks; whilst the archers discharged their arrows from the arbalasts. Richard and his ten knights scattered the Saracens wherever they rushed. The large-hearted courtesies of chivalry had extended to the Mussulman leaders, amongst the other refinements of the eastern races. Saphadin, the brother of Saladin, sent Richard during the fight two noble horses, requesting him to accept them. From the morning sun to the setting sun Richard had fought against great odds. That day's terrible toil was followed by fever. His true friend, Saphadin, was at hand, to arrange an armistice. A truce for three years was finally determined on; by which the pilgrims were to have free access to Jerusalem. Some of the Turkish chiefs proposed to take vengeance on the Christians who were in their power. Saladin preferred honour to revenge. The great Curdish soldier, the magnanimous and wise Saladin, died within six months of this truce. He had a higher notion of the duties of a sovereign than the Richard whose courage he admired. "Spill no blood," he said to his son, "for it will one day reach thy head. Preserve the hearts of thy subjects by loving care, for they are entrusted to thee by God."

Richard sailed from Acre on the 9th October. The solitary ship in which he had embarked was detained a month by contrary winds before he reached Corfu. Here he hired three coasting-vessels to take him and twenty companions to Ragusa. They landed in the guise of pilgrims; but the lavishness of the king was so little in keeping with his assumed character, that his real rank was soon suspected. The impatient adventurer, with a single attendant, rode day and night, till he arrived in the neighbourhood of Vienna. He rested at a little village, whilst his companion went out to buy food. The person of this attendant was known to one who had been with the duke of Austria in Palestine; and this knowledge led to the captivity of Richard. Leopold of Austria had been scorned by Richard at Acre; and he was also brother-in-law to Isaac of Cyprus. His mean soul had the gratification of a cowardly revenge; and he sent Richard a prisoner to the castle of Tyernsteign. The terrible Richard was now in worse hands than those of Saracens. The duke of Austria sold his captive to the emperor of Germany, and the emperor was ready to sell him again to the highest bidder. He kept Richard safely chained in a castle in the Tyrol. His imprisonment was made known to Europe by a letter from the emperor to the king of France. In England, the people were faithful to their captive king. Prince John was in open hostility to his brother. He surrendered to Philip some portions of the

continental dominions of Richard, and did homage to him for the rest. He returned to England with a band of mercenaries, and proclaimed that the king had died in prison. But the prelates and barons were firm; and the schemes of John were overthrown. Philip invaded Normandy, but with very partial success. Longchamp, the deposed chancellor, was the first to make any active exertions for the deliverance of Richard; and he succeeded in bringing him before the diet of the empire at Hagenau. An investigation of the charges against the king took place; but he defended himself with such spirit, that his chains were struck off, and the amount of ransom was the only question in dispute. It was some months before a sufficient instalment of the amount required—a hundred thousand marks—could be raised by taxation in England; and even then the emperor negotiated with John for a bribe to detain his brother. The treaty was finally accomplished. When the king of France knew that this game of state-craft and treachery was at an end, he wrote to John, "Take care of yourself, for the devil is let loose." After a captivity which, Hoveden says, lasted one year, six weeks, and three days, the king of England was delivered to his mother, Eleanor. He hastened on his way to Antwerp; and after a long delay in navigating the river, and by contrary winds, reached England for a short sojourn.

Richard had been absent more than four years from the land of which he was king. According to a letter of Pope Celestine to the prelates of England, "Richard, the illustrious king of the English, having assumed the cross, and prepared himself for avenging the injuries done to the Redeemer, has therein, like a prudent man, and one who fears the Lord, considered that the cares of governing his kingdom ought to be postponed to the performance of his duty, and has left the same under the Apostolic protection." * The duty of governing his subjects being thus held by such high authority as a very inferior part of his office, it is not likely that Richard felt much compunction when he came back to an impoverished, discontented, and distracted people. The churches had been stripped of their sacred vessels; the traders had been taxed to the utmost extent of their small ability; the agriculturists had sold their scanty stocks to gather the large amount required for the king's ransom. There is a curious piece of evidence of the impatience of some of the people of London, as it showed itself in the year when Richard was set free. It is connected with the story of William Fitz-Osbert, or William with the Long Beard; and is derived from the roll of the king's justiciars. William Fitz-Osbert, on the 21st of November, 1194, preferred an appeal before the justices at Westminster against Richard Fitz-Osbert, his brother, which appeal he supported by his own testimony. He made oath that, at a meeting held at the stone house of Richard Fitz-Osbert, a discussion arose concerning the aids granted to the king for his ransom, when Richard exclaimed, "In recompense for the money taken from me by the chancellor within the Tower of London, I would lay out forty marks to purchase a chain in which the king and his chancellor might be hanged." Jordan, the tanner, and Robert Brand, heard this speech; and wished that the king might always remain where he then was,—meaning in prison; and they all exclaimed, "Come what will, in London we never will have any other king except our mayor, Henry

* Hoveden.

Fitz-Ailwin, of London Stone." The story of William with the Long Beard has been told by historians without this preliminary incident, the knowledge of which we owe to one of the most judicious of antiquaries.* The causes of the insurrection which this William headed in 1196, and in which he lost his life, are rendered clearer by this curious illustration of popular feeling in 1194. Henry Fitz-Ailwin was the first mayor of London, the city, prior to 1189, having been governed by a portreeve, who was an officer of the crown. But the popular magistrate appears to have been as unjust in his exactions, as the chancellor whom Richard Fitz-Osbert and his friends desired to hang. Hoveden's account is very distinct of the oppressions which were exercised in the great trading city, governed by its own magistrates and guilds. "More frequently than usual, in consequence of the king's captivity and other accidents, aids of no small amount were imposed upon the citizens; and the rich men, sparing their own purses, wanted the poor to pay every thing." For this reason, William Fitz-Osbert, in 1196, "went over the sea to the king in Normandy, and demanded his protection for himself and the people." It was not of royal cupidity, but of civic corruption that he went to complain to king Richard. "He informed the king," says our good old chronicler Holinshed, "of certain great oppressions and excessive outrages used by rich men against the poor (namely the worshipful of the city, the mayor and aldermen), who in their hustings, when any tallage was to be gathered, burthened the poor further than was thought reason, to ease themselves; whereupon the said William, being a seditious person, and of a busy nature, ceased not to make complaints." This very troublesome lawyer, for lawyer he was, "sharp of wit and somedeal lettered; a bold man of speech, and sad of countenance," † was a type of many a bold man of speech, who from time to time, even to this day, has asserted the equal laws of justice against "rights and privileges." Such men are generally persecuted in their generation. William of the Long Beard had a hard fate, though fifty thousand of the "common people" stood at his back. He was seized in the church of Saint Mary Bow, of Cheap, and, being first stabbed, was then hanged. He was long reverenced as "a holy man and martyr." His quarrel with the civic functionaries might have been disregarded by the nobles and prelates as a mere quarrel amongst obscure burgesses, had not Fitz-Osbert gone across the sea to appeal to Richard. For this reason Hubert Fitz-Walter, archbishop of Canterbury, who was the king's justiciary, interfered with the free movements of "the common people," who were to be arrested wherever they were found outside the city; and accordingly some humble London merchants were seized at Mid Lent at the fair at Stamford.

We can only obtain such glimpses as this story of William of the Long Beard affords, of the condition of the cities and great towns of England at this period. In all of the trading communities there were stringent regulations for buying and selling, enforced by the universal machinery of guilds. This organisation was as complete as that of the military system of feudality; and as the lord controlled his tenant and received his fealty, and the tenant commanded his socman, and the socman his serf, so the chief of a guild ruled over

* Sir F. Palgrave, in his official publication of the Rolls, from which we learn that the unbrotherly denunciation of Richard Fitz-Osbert by William was not successful.

† Fabyan.

his company, and his company over their apprentices, and their apprentices over their servants. There was perpetual watchfulness and command in every branch of industry. No one could pursue a trade to which he had not been duly trained. No one could make an article except of a prescribed size and quality. No one could fix his own price upon what he made or sold. Such a system was adapted to the times in which it grew, and in which it continued, either for protection or oppression, for many centuries. That all these laws impeded production there can be no doubt. How far they promoted the welfare of the humblest classes, defending them against extortion, adulteration, and the other manifold evils and disgraces of modern trade, is a question not so easily determined. The story, however, of William Fitz-Osbert shows that municipal rapacity may be as tyrannous as regal; and that there could be no real safety against injustice till the force of public opinion should hold all authority in its proper position of responsibility as well as power.

There is a curious, though exaggerated representation of the condition of the cities and towns of England, in the chronicle of Richard of Devizes. It occurs incidentally in a popular story of a Christian boy of France, who through the artifices of a French Jew is sent to Winchester, to be there offered as a sacrifice by the Jews. The story is altogether worthless; but the exhibition of manners has an historical interest. Go not to London, says the Jew. Every race of every nation abides there, and have there brought their vices. It is full of gamblers and panders, of braggadocios and flatterers, of buffoons and fortune-tellers, of extortioners and magicians. At Canterbury people die in open day in the streets for want of bread and employment. Rochester and Chichester, mere villages, are cities only in name. Oxford barely sustains its clerks. Exeter supports men and beasts with the same grain. Bath is buried in a low valley full of sulphury vapour. Worcester, Chester, and Hereford are infested by the desperate Welshmen. York abounds in rascally Scots. Ely is putrefied by the surrounding marshes. At Durham, Norwich, and Lincoln there are none who can speak French. At Bristol, every body is, or has been, a soap-maker, and every Frenchman esteems soap-makers as he does night-men. But Winchester is the best of all cities, and the people have only one fault—they tell lies like watchmen. All this belongs to the region of fiction; but, like many other of the products of that fertile empire, there are riches to be found amongst the rubbish. It is in legend and ballad, rather than in chronicle, that we must look for the traces of the remarkable condition of large numbers of men who frequented the royal forests of England as organised plunderers, defying the just legal enactments against robbers, as well as utterly disregarding the fearful punishments denounced against those who carried bows and arrows in these forests, or "offended against the king relative to his venison."

Richard landed at Sandwich on the 12th of March, 1194. On the 28th of March, the castle of Nottingham, which was held by men at arms in the interest of John, surrendered to the king. He is now ready for a short holiday. "On the 29th day of March, Richard, king of England, went to see Clipstone and the forests of Sherwood, which he had never seen before, and they pleased him greatly; after which, on the same day, he returned to Nottingham."* Thierry intimates that it was something beyond the charm of

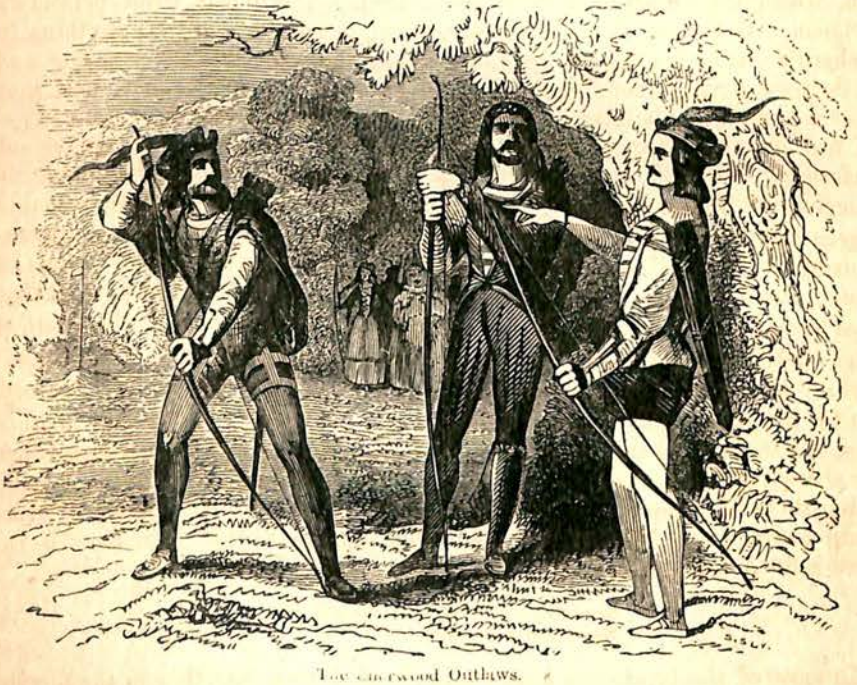
* Hoveden.

woodland scenery that took Richard to Sherwood, in this early spring of 1194. The fame of the forest outlaws had, he imagines, presented an object of attraction to Richard's adventurous spirit. If the king of the crusades and the greenwood king had met, either as friends or foes, the chroniclers would

The Parliament Oak in Clipstone Park.

not, in all likelihood, have been silent on the matter. The first distinct mention of Robin Hood is by Fordun, the Scottish historian, who wrote in the 14th century. He says, "Then arose among the disinherited the famous brigand Robert Hode, with his accomplices, whom the common people are so fond of celebrating in their games and stage-plays; and whose exploits, chanted by strolling ballad-singers, delight them above all things." Upon these ballads, adapting themselves, generation by generation, to the changes of language, rests the only historical evidence of the individuality of Robin Hood, beyond this mention by Fordun. A theory has been set up by some enthusiastic interpreters of song and legend, that Robin Hood, and Little John, and many a nameless outlaw, were great heroes who had been defeated, with Simon de Montfort, at the battle of Evesham in 1265. Others make Robin Hood to have been an Earl of Huntingdon. He is the Saxon yeoman, Locksley, of Sir Walter Scott. According to Thierry, the whole of the band that ranged the vast woodland districts of Derby, Nottingham, and Yorkshire, were the remnants of the old Saxon race, who had lived in this condition of defiance to Norman oppression, from the time of Hereward,—the same type of generous

robbers and redressers of wrongs, as the famous Cumberland bandits, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of Cloudesley. Without entering upon these controversial theories, we accept Robin Hood as a real personage. There may have been a succession of Robin Hoods, during the long term of Norman tyranny; but whoever he was, and in whatever reign he lived, Robin Hood is the representative of the never-ending protest of the people against misrule,—a practical protest which set up a rude kind of democratic justice against the manifold atrocities of aristocratic tyranny. It was a contest, no doubt, of robber against robber; but the popular admiration of the hero of the forests was based upon a more enduring principle than the knightly admiration of the hero of the crusades. The ballad-singers have outlived the troubadours. The "blind harpers, or such-like tavern minstrels, that give a fit of mirth for a groat, their matters being for the most part stories of the old time, made purposely for the recreation of the common people," *—these touched the largest sympathies of yeoman and labourer, even when recitals of heavy



The outlawed Outlaws.

wrongs and terrible redress were "stories of the old time." For they sang of one who took the goods of the rich baron to bestow them upon the lowly serf, and defied the horrible penalties of the forest laws, whilst he killed his venison in spite of earl and sheriff. The great body of the people were a suffering race long after the difference in suffering between Saxon and Norman had passed away. The Normans, indeed, brought into England a contempt for the labouring people, the serfs and villans (by whatever special name called), which did not exist in any such degree before the Conquest. The peasant

* Puttenham, "Art of English Poesie," 1589.

was, under the Norman rulers, in every respect in bondage. His foreign master plundered him and held him in contempt. His foreign king taxed him by the most odious tallage, whenever a penny was put by after the necessities of life and the exactions of the lord were supplied. The humblest cabin and the coarsest fare were thought almost too good for the villan. "Why should villans eat beef or any dainty food?" asks one of the Norman jongleurs.* These charitable poets give us a pithy proverb:

"Il fait à Dieu honte
Qui villain haut monte."

(He shames God who raises a villan.) Thus, the privations of the peasantry, and the insults, still harder to endure, went on amidst a smouldering hatred, till the great outbreak of the time of Richard II. In such compositions as the Robin Hood ballads, the detestation of the oppressors was long kept alive. How thoroughly artificial and extravagant are the lyrics and romances of chivalry compared with these songs of the rustics! Of Richard the Crusader, the least extraordinary feat is that he tore out the heart of a hungry lion, which the emperor of Germany introduced into the royal prisoner's dungeon. But when these minstrels record, not at all implying anything to Richard's disadvantage, that he gaily supped upon the flesh of a young and fat Saracen, having a longing for pork which could not be gratified; and that he caused a Saracen's head to be served up to the ambassadors of Saladin;—we feel how this "specimen of what crusaders were supposed capable of performing, although totally fabulous, shows the idea which the minstrels conceived of such a character, when carried to the highest and most laudable degree of perfection." † On the other hand, having put aside the exaggerations of the Robin Hood ballads, we feel that we are in the natural regions of poetry, surrounded by adventures that might have been real, and by men that have human hearts in their bosoms, when we read the stories of "the gentlest thief that ever was." ‡ Fuller, who places Robin amongst his "Worthies," says: "Know, reader, he is entered on our catalogue, not for his thievery, but for his gentleness." In the most popular poetry of what we call the rude ages, the outlaw had the same attributes of bravery and generosity with which the character of Richard the lion-hearted has been invested; without exhibiting those ferocious traits which belonged to the chivalric worship of mere brute courage and blind fanaticism. The popular notion of a hero is the more refined one, although Robin be merely "a good yeoman."

"So curteyse an outlawe as he was one,
Was never none yfounde."

In spite of the tyrannous laws which banded men together in the forests, and the oppressions which invested robbers with the character of redressers of wrong, the evils of society had some mitigations. The small agricultural tenants of the feudal lord; the socmen, who were allowed allotments for defined contributions of labour; and even the serfs, who were wholly dependent upon one master, without a choice of other service, these had

* See an interesting Essay on the English Peasantry, by J. Wright, Esq., in "Archæologia," vol. xxx. p. 238.

† Sir Walter Scott, in "Edinburgh Review," vol. vii. p. 405.

‡ Camden.

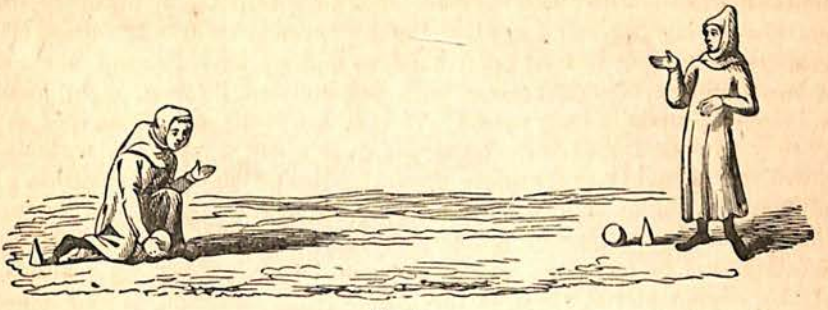
some compensating circumstances, amidst a great deal of injustice, and a habit of life which we now regard as miserable. The duties of these, as well as of every other working member of the community, were in great measure defined. Industry was spared many of those evils of competition which are almost inseparable from the struggles of modern society. The capitalist was the Jew; but his mode of dealing suited only unthrifty abbots and plundering barons; for when the borrower came into the gripe of the Israelite, bond was heaped upon bond, so that we have a record how a debt of two hundred pounds became, with accumulated interest, eight hundred and eighty pounds in four years.* The yeoman and the burgess sold as fast as they produced, and turned the penny as soon as possible, without the desire or the ability to speculate upon the rise or fall of commodities. The military training of all classes gave a sort of distinction even to the race of villans, and kept them in healthful excitement. The universal feeling of devotion, and of obedience to one dominant church, lifted their minds out of the mere material cares of life. They were ignorant, in our sense of ignorance. Their religious observances carry with them an air of much that is ridiculous and debasing. But they were not debased by the undoubting earnestness with which they confided in their spiritual leaders. The distinctions of rank were so clearly defined, that no one aspired to belong to a station above him, or to affect to be what he was not. The peasantry had their holidays and rustic games, on which neither the lord nor the priest looked unkindly. The people of the towns had their in-door amusements, of which gambling was the most attractive to high and low. They had chess;

Ancient Chessmen. (Brit. Mus.)

but the rattle of the dice was far more seductive than the marshalling of bishop and knight. The passion of playing for money was so universal, that, in the crusade, in which all ranks of men were engaged, the kings of England and France made the most stringent regulations to keep gambling

* See the "Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond."

within limits. No man in the army was to play at any kind of game for money, with the exception of knights and the clergy; and no knight or clerk was to lose more than twenty shillings in any one day. The men-at-arms, and "other of the lower orders," as the record runs, who should be found playing of themselves—that is, without their masters looking on and



Bowling.

permitting—were to be whipped; and, if mariners, were to be plunged into the sea on three successive mornings, "after the usage of sailors." These regulations were to prevent the quarrels which were the natural consequence of gambling, at this period and in most other periods when force stood in the place of argument. We find in an old record, that "John, son of King Henry, and Fulco Guarine fell at variance at chess; and John brake Fulco's head with the chess-board, and then Fulco gave him such a blow, that he had almost killed him."* In the smooth garden-lawns of the towns, and on the village green, the favourite game of the sixteenth century was known in the twelfth or thirteenth; for many "a marvellous good neighbour, in sooth, and a very good bowler" of the days of Elizabeth, practised the art as it was practised, with little variation, in the days of John. The rougher games of the people were a supplementary part of their military training. Wrestling was the national pastime, from London to the Land's End, from the West to the North. The sturdy yeomen wrestled for prizes—a ram or a bull, a red gold ring or a pipe of wine. One of the Robin Hood ballads says:—

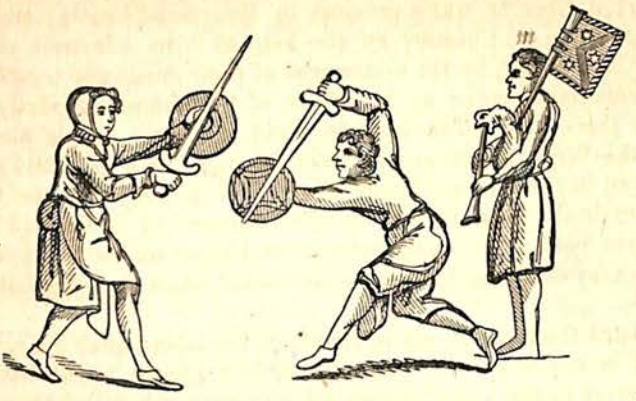
Quarter-staff. (From the old Ballad of Robin Hood and the Tanner.)

"What man beareth him best, ywis,
The prize shall bear away."

The quarter-staff was the rustic weapon of the West; but the Tanner of

* Quoted from Leland's "Collectanea," in Percy's "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels."

Nottingham, whose "staff of oak was eight foot and a half," and Robin Hood, had a bout in Sherwood, long celebrated in song and picture. The sword-dance of the Saxons came down to their successors, and held its



Sword-Dance. (Royal MS. 14 E. iii.)

honoured place among popular sports long after the conquest. The acrobat, who went about to market and fair, was the genuine descendant of the Saxon gleeman, who made knives and balls circle through his hands as adroitly as the modern conjuror. The Anglo-Norman juggler balanced his wheel and his sword; and "the musical girls," whose attractions Richard of Devizes denounces, tumbled before knight and peasant, as the daughter of Herodias "tumbled before Herod." The bearward was not unknown in the towns with his monkey and his drum; and to the country revel came the taborer and the bagpiper, the dancers and the minstrel. The minstrel was the

Country Revel. (Royal MS. 2 B. vii.)

privileged wanderer. History says that Longchamp, the chancellor, was the chief instrument of the release of Richard from his dungeon in the Tyrol; but romance will not surrender to chancellor or bishop the fame of Blondel, who, searching about for his beloved master, "became acquainted with them of the castle, as minstrels do easily win acquaintance anywhere." The English minstrels, we may suppose, did not sing such refined verses as those of which Blondel sang one verse before Richard's prison window, and the king

replied with the second verse. Chester fair, in the time of John, was a great resort of vagabonds; for by the charter of the city no one could be there apprehended for any theft or misdeed except it were committed in the fair. Ranulph, earl of Chester, was a prisoner in Rhuydland Castle; and Lord de Lacy, the Constable of Chester, by the help of "the minstrels of all sorts that met at Chester fair, by the allurement of their music got together a vast number of such loose people as, by reason of the before specified privilege, were then in that city." The minstrels and the loose people alarmed the warders of the Welsh castle, and released the earl. We have said enough to show that even in the Norman times of unequal government, the free spirit of the people broke forth in that mingled temper of frolic and kindness which has ever been their characteristic, and that, under the worst rulers, there was no very enduring time to be chronicled when this was not "Merry England."

Had Richard the king chosen to remain in the island after his return from Palestine, it is not impossible that his ardent nature might have taken a generous interest in the brave people, of whom so many had been his companions in danger and suffering. But Richard never saw England after this visit of two months. The record of his proceedings from the 12th of March to the 9th of May, 1194, as given by Hoveden, shows how this energetic Plantagenet employed himself in this limited visit. A fortnight of March is passed in the favourite occupation of fighting for the castles which were occupied by the creatures of his brother John. On the 31st he holds a great council at Nottingham, and dispossesses certain barons of fortresses and shrievalties, and puts them up for sale to the highest bidder. He calls, too, for a judgment against John, who is cited to appear within forty days, or forfeit all right to the kingdom; for he had broken his fealty to Richard, taken possession of his castles, wasted his lands, and made a treaty with his enemy the king of France. The judgment was given. At this council, a land-tax was decreed, and knight's service was demanded to enable Richard to carry an army to Normandy. At the beginning of April, Richard had a meeting with the king of the Scots. They had many discussions about their respective rights, and a charter was finally granted at Northampton, which did much for the dignity of the king of Scotland, though Richard again and again refused to grant him Northumberland, as was desired. On the 17th of April the king of England went through the ceremony of a second coronation. He was now looking to depart; but he first reconciled Geoffrey, the archbishop of York, with Longchamp, the chancellor. With his mother, Eleanor, he stayed at Portsmouth till the 30th, "which appeared to him very tedious." On the 2nd of May he persisted in sailing in one of his long-ships, but the adverse wind had no compassion for his impatience. He was forced to return to the Isle of Wight, where he was weather-bound for nine days. The royal long-ship of the twelfth century, and the royal steam-yacht of the nineteenth, offer a striking contrast. At length he lands at Harfleur, and his warriors with their horses and arms arrive in a hundred large vessels. John falls on his knees before him, and obtains his pardon. The king of France was besieging Verneuil; but on hearing of Richard's approach leaves his troops. "The king of England being full of activity, and more swift than the discharge of a Balearic sling," hurries to do battle with his great suzerain, and pursues his

retreating army with the edge of the sword. Richard is now in his proper line of business. In a few months he drives Philip of France out of Normandy, Touraine, and Maine. In England Hubert, the archbishop of Canterbury, is guardian of the realm, and his chief duty is to raise money for these wars. We shall not attempt to pursue the records of this sanguinary contest, which was continued for six years, with an occasional truce when each of the combatants was exhausted. The horrible cruelties that were inflicted upon prisoners, the desolation of the seat of war, the privations endured by the English people to meet the exactions of their rulers,—these are the consequences at which we must steadily look, instead of following the narratives of siege and skirmish, of towns burnt and churches plundered. The modes by which the lion-hearted king, through his ministers, raised money in England, appear to combine the attributes of the tyrant and the swindler. To order the great seal to be broken, and proclaim that no grant under that seal should be valid, unless the fees due to the crown were paid a second time for affixing the new seal, is an act which scarcely accords with the magnanimity which it has been somewhat the fashion to ascribe to this Plantagenet. The mean qualities of his brother John excite no surprise. In the characters of these two sons of Henry II. there were striking points of resemblance as well as of difference. The last scene of Richard's life is an epitome of his qualities. He perished, not fighting for a dukedom, but for a paltry treasure which one of his barons had discovered on his estate. The royal right to treasure so found was asserted by the king. The viscount of Limoges refused to surrender all the gold and silver, though he offered a large portion. Richard, accordingly, laid siege to the viscount's castle of Chaluz; and would allow the garrison no conditional surrender. They asked for safety of life and limb; but the king "swore that he would take them by storm, and hang them all, and accordingly the knights and men-at-arms returned to the castle in sorrow and confusion, and prepared to make a defence." * Reconnoitring the fortress, Richard was wounded in the arm by an arrow, aimed by Bertrand de Gurdun. The castle being captured, the king ordered all the people to be hanged, one alone excepted—the youth who had wounded him. In those days of the rudest surgery, the barbed iron head of the arrow could not be extracted from the flesh, without the limb being cruelly mangled. For twelve days Richard suffered the agonies of his wound, and saw, at last, that death was approaching. He bequeathed the kingdom of England and all his other dominions to John; and ordered a fourth of his treasures to be distributed amongst his servants and the poor. Hoveden tells the rest of the dying scene:—"He then ordered Bertram de Gurdun, † who had wounded him, to come into his presence, and said to him, 'What harm have I done to you, that you have killed me.' On which he made answer, 'You slew my father and my two brothers with your own hand, and you intended now to kill me; therefore take any revenge on me that you may think fit, for I will readily endure the greatest torments you can devise,

* Hoveden.

† In an ancient anonymous account of Richard's death, it is stated that the king had forced his way into the inner court of the castle; but that one tower held out, in which were two knights, and thirty-eight men and women. According to this account, the knight who shot the arrow from the cross-bow was Peter de Basile.

so long as you have met with your end, after having inflicted evils so many and so great upon the world.' On this the king ordered him to be released, and said, 'I forgive you my death.'" This part of the dying man's wish—this last effort of a nature not altogether cruel—was disregarded. Marchades, the chief of the hireling soldiers called Routiers, after Richard's death flayed the youth alive, and then hanged him.

Signing the Truce.

Seal of King John to Magna Charta.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Accession of John—Arthur of Brittany—War for the succession to England and the French provinces—Peace with Philip of France—Blanche of Castile—Insurrection in Poitou against John—Arthur taken prisoner—His death—The States of Brittany demand justice against John—Total loss of Normandy and other provinces—Pope Innocent III.—His quarrel with John—England placed under an Interdict—Ireland—Wales—London Bridge completed—Consequences of the Interdict—John excommunicated and deposed by the Pope—Philip about to invade England—John swears fealty to the Pope—The Barons resist John's demands—Stephen Langton, the archbishop—League of the Churchmen and Barons—Runnymede—Magna Charta—Its provisions, and their effects upon the nation.

THE first Richard died on the 6th of April, 1199. The reign of John commences from Ascension-day, the 27th of May, when he was crowned at Westminster. In this interval of fifty days the future destiny of England remained uncertain. It was the will of a beneficent Providence that the island should be separated from France; and that the interests of her ruling classes being concentrated under one monarchy, the people should rapidly advance in the attainment of just government. The crimes and weaknesses of the new king were the chief instruments of this important revolution.

Had the crown of England descended by strict hereditary succession, Arthur, the son of Geoffrey, the third son of Henry II., would have been king in preference to John, the fifth son of Henry. But

JOHN.

Arthur was a boy of twelve years; John was thirty-two. According to the speech of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the coronation, the claims of Arthur were glanced at "as a more lawful descent of inheritance pretended by others." But to the assembled prelates and peers the Archbishop said, "You are come hither this day to choose you a king, and such a one as, if need shall require, may be able of himself to take such a charge upon him; and having undertaken the same, ready to execute that which he shall think to be expedient for the benefit of his subjects." Much controversy has arisen about the authenticity of this speech, as given in the chronicle of Roger of Wendover;* for it assumes the monarchy to be elective, somewhat beyond the warrant of the constitution. John's claim, on the ground of hereditary right, was, that being the surviving brother of the late deceased king, he was nearer of kin to him than Arthur, the son of Richard's brother. The claims of Arthur had not been overlooked in England, in the interval between the death of Richard and the coronation of John. But the interests of the young prince had been overpowered by the promises which the Archbishop and the Justiciary had held out at a great council at Northampton, and by respect for the will of the deceased king. In Normandy, also, the pretensions of John were recognised without opposition, as well as in Aquitaine and Poitou. But in Maine, Touraine, and Anjou, the cause of the young Plantagenet was openly espoused. John, alarmed at the position of his continental authority, returned to Normandy before the end of June.

Philip of France, the most politic of monarchs, saw clearly his position. There had been, since the conquest of England, two mighty sovereigns of France. The Plantagenet race, at one period, seemed not unlikely to swallow up the race of Capet, and to become the sole heads of the greatest empire of the world. The time was come for a real trial of strength. The battle had been fought, without any decisive results, with Richard, who had many of the qualities of a great warrior, however wanting in those of a sagacious king. Another had succeeded who was neither wise nor warlike. The rival claim of the young Arthur of Brittany was the weak point in the succession of John. Shakspere has put this with historical fidelity.† The wilfulness of John, and, more than wilfulness, his licentious, cruel, and treacherous nature, precluded a compromise of this dispute, and converted it into a struggle for one-half of France with the king, to whom he owed fealty. Happy was it for England, and for Normandy and the other provinces, that the suzerain was the conqueror.

Philip of France espoused the cause of Arthur, not from any regard to justice, or any sympathy for an injured youth. The boy was a tool in his

* This Chronicle, which precedes that of Matthew Paris, was, until recently, assigned to that historian, who merely transcribed it.

† "Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geoffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island, and the territories;
To Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine;
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword,
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign."

King John, Act ii. scene i.

hands, to be taken up, or laid aside, as best suited the purposes of this wary politician. Constance, the mother of Arthur, was the reigning duchess of Brittany. There is one delineation of her character, as the impersonation of maternal love, which will always take the place of the historical belief that she was a weak and selfish woman. In Arthur's interest, Philip invaded Normandy, and placed garrisons in Anjou, Maine, and Touraine. There was war for eight months between the rival kings, and then an armistice. During the two months of this suspension of hostilities John was in England. In one of the most remarkable monuments of antiquarian industry, the movements of king John have been traced from the first day of his reign to the last, in a chronological Table, which shows at what places a vast number of official documents of this period were dated.* From this Itinerary we learn that in March, and the first part of April, of the year 1200, the king was at Winchester, Windsor, Westminster, Woodstock, Northampton, Clipstone, Tickhill, York, Bolsover, Derby, Burton-upon-Trent, Lichfield, Worcester, Farringdon. This is a considerable tour in the days of bad roads. In the latter half of April he is again at Windsor and Westminster, and then slowly journeys by Guildford, Alton, and Bishop's Waltham to Porchester. On the 2nd of May he is once more in Normandy. England does not see him again till October. On the 23rd of May the kings of France and England conclude a peace. The interests of Arthur are abandoned by Philip, and he is compelled to do homage to his uncle for Brittany. John has a niece, Blanche of Castile, whom he endows with money and fiefs as her marriage-portion; for the alliance is to be cemented by Lewis, the son of Philip, becoming the husband of Blanche. But John belongs to that order of minds who make for themselves great reverses. He had been married since 1189 to Hadwisa, the daughter of William, earl of Gloucester. He now finds it convenient to obtain a divorce on the usual plea of consanguinity; for he had fallen into that desperate state of passion miscalled love, which tyrants, whether Plantagenet or Tudor, have claimed the privilege to gratify at every cost of honour or decency. In his progress through Aquitaine he had seen the beautiful betrothed of Hugh, count of La Marche; and the lady, although she was privately espoused as some believe, was tempted to violate her faith and become the wife of John. He went to England in October, 1200, to be crowned with his new queen; but there were consequences of that unlawful marriage which the passionate king did not expect. The count of La Marche headed an insurrection against John in Poitou and Aquitaine. The force which the king of England brought into the field was too strong for him to resist. But the count had a secret ally in the crafty Philip, to whom he appealed to redress his wrongs. John, from the June of 1201 to the December of 1203, was away from England. During these two years and a half he lost Normandy, Anjou, Maine, and Touraine. All that had been inherited from William of Normandy, and Fulk of Anjou, was gone.

In 1202 Philip was again at war with John. The ostensible cause was the injury and insult to the count of La Marche, for the redress of whose wrongs there were many confederate barons and knights in arms. King

* "Description of the Patent Rolls, to which is added an Itinerary of King John," by Thomas Duffus Hardy. Published by the Record Commission.

Philip again uses Arthur for the purposes of his own ambition. Constance, the duchess of Brittany, was now dead; and the young duke was sent by Philip into Poitou to head the insurrection against John. Arthur, the boy of fifteen, had a strong force of his own faithful Bretons with him, and the discontented nobles met him at Tours with their scanty band of followers. Eleanor, the old queen-mother, was at Mirabeau, near Poitiers. Arthur, with his little army, marched to seize the person of his grandmother, who had always been bitterly opposed to his pretensions. The wary Eleanor took refuge in the strong citadel. While the Poitevin army was besieging this fortress with little caution, John suddenly arrived with a powerful force; and the town was taken by surprise on the night of the 1st of August. Arthur was a prisoner, with two hundred nobles and knights who had followed his unhappy fortunes.

Over the precise circumstances of the fate of Arthur there hangs a terrible mystery. At the beginning of the thirteenth century we have no contemporary chronicler, except Wendover. The later historians furnish us with very doubtful and imperfect notions of the death of the duke of Brittany. That Hubert de Burgh was commissioned to put out the eyes of Arthur, and that he forbore to commit that atrocity, rests upon the authority of one of these transmitters of popular tradition. Shakspere has made the legend an imperishable fact. Hubert was warden of the castle of Falaise, where the young prince was first confined. He was then moved, according to some writers, to Rouen. He suddenly vanished, says one, in a manner unknown to all. The king was suspected to have killed him with his own hand, says another. A more circumstantial account says, he took Arthur into a boat, stabbed him twice with his own hand, and threw the dead body into the river, about three miles from the castle. That he was murdered, and at the instigation of John, if not by his hand, there can be little doubt. There was nothing in the nature of the man to make him stop short of assassination.* Those who were taken prisoners at Mirabeau he treated with a cruelty which rarely disgraced the times of chivalry. He loaded them with irons, and kept them in dungeons of Normandy and England. We have distinct records of twenty-five of these prisoners being confined in Corfe Castle; and there, it is stated in the annals of the monks of Margan, twenty-two were starved to death. The Maid of Brittany, Arthur's eldest sister, wore out her life in confinement at Bristol. When, upon the death of his mother, in 1203, John granted a general pardon to "all prisoners, whatever the cause for which they may have been detained, whether for murder, felony, larceny, or breaking the forest laws," he specially excepted "the prisoners taken in our late war, those also whom we sent over from Normandy into England to be there kept and imprisoned." † He could pardon the murderer, but not the soldier who followed the fortunes of his injured prince. John had his reward, in the gathering hatred of all mankind. In 1203, at a meeting of the estates of Brittany, at Vannes, it was resolved that a deputation should go before their

* There is a curious passage in a safe-conduct granted by John, and dated on the 24th of August, from Chinon, in which he says to Alan Fitz-Count and others who were desirous of seeing him, as he had been informed by "Furnie, servant of Arthur our nephew,"—"We command you, however, that ye do nought whereby evil may befal our nephew Arthur." ("Patent Rolls," p. 36.)

† Hardy, "Patent Rolls," p. 62.

feudal lord, king Philip, and demand justice. Upon this, John was summoned to appear, as a vassal of France, at the court of his peers. A safe conduct was demanded on the part of John. He shall come unmolested, said Philip to John's envoy, who put another question as to his safe return. The king of France replied that he should return safe, if the judgment of his peers acquitted him. The bishop of Ely was the representative of John, and he alleged that the duke of Normandy could not come without the king of England, and that the barons of England would not permit their king to run the risk of death or imprisonment. The king of France contended that his rights as paramount lord over the duke of Normandy were not lost because William, who was the vassal of France, obtained England by force. John did not appear; and the court adjudged that "whereas, John, duke of Normandy, in violation of his oath to Philip, his lord, had murdered the son of his elder brother, a homager of the crown of France, and near kinsman to the king, and had perpetrated the crime within the signiory of France, he was found guilty of felony and treason, and was therefore adjudged to forfeit all the lands he held by homage." Publicists doubt the legality of the sentence. Of its moral justice there can be little doubt. It was no mere form of words when the fiefs of John were confiscated. Philip took, with scarcely an attempt at resistance, the strong places of Normandy. John's general, the earl of Pembroke, made a gallant attempt to relieve a besieged castle on the Seine. John himself lingered at Rouen, in a voluptuous indifference to disaster; fancying that he could easily recover the power that was melting away from him. At last a strong place in the neighbourhood of the great Norman city was taken, and he fled to England. The Normans, however unwilling to become a part of France, from which they had been so long disunited, were unable effectually to resist the power of Philip. John relied upon the aid of that England which he and his predecessor regarded chiefly as a land to be plundered; and England thought the time was come when her wealth should no longer be dissipated in Normandy, when her language should be spoken by those who ruled over her, when her laws should be administered by those who abided amongst her people, when her Church should be upheld by those who had no foreign bishoprics and abbeys. Rouen fell to the French besiegers. The duchy was won by France. The other provinces were all separated from the rule of the Plantagenets, with the exception of Aquitaine. In two years after, John made one more attempt to gain possession of his ancient fiefs; for the people were somewhat discontented at their fair provinces having lost their distinctive character of independent dominions. In 1206, John landed at Rochelle; took the castle of Montauban; burnt Angers; and left the usual traces of cruelty and devastation. He mingled the excitement of siege and battle with the more congenial excitement of gross licentiousness. His courage, like that of most profligates, was sudden and evanescent. On the eve of a battle he proposed a negotiation, and then stole off to England before a treaty was concluded. Through the legate of the pope an armistice was agreed upon. The contest was at an end.

We have passed through the first act of the great historical drama which was presented during the eighteen years of the reign of John. England now stands alone. "This precious stone, set in the silver sea," has now to fight

her own battles, to assert her own rights, to gather her own harvests, without dependence upon foreign lords. England is a nation. The distinctions of Saxon and Norman are gone. The English people possess the island. But there is one authority, which, having established ecclesiastical supremacy, presumes to assert temporal dominion. The pope of this period, Innocent III., was one of the most resolved and ambitious men that ever filled the papal throne. With spiritual power he was unsatisfied, unless he could render that power an instrument for the subjugation of every European state to a humiliating subserviency. This principle, as expressed by himself in a memorable letter, was that "as God created two luminaries, one superior for the day, and the other inferior for the night, which last owes its splendour entirely to the first, so he has disposed that the regal dignity should be but a reflection of the papal authority, and entirely subordinate to it." He assumed the regency of Sicily during a minority. He decided between rival claimants to the imperial crown of Germany, first setting up one prince and then deposing him. He excommunicated Philip of France for an unlawful marriage, and compelled him to take back his repudiated wife. John of England, always a slave to his violent impulses, when he had lost France, and was unpopular in England, embarked in a quarrel with this dangerous pontiff. In 1207, the see of Canterbury was vacant. The monks of St. Augustine's abbey had always contended, though in vain, for the right to elect the archbishop. The prelates had as constantly resisted this pretension, and had generally agreed to the recommendation of the king in their election of a fit person for this important office. Dr. Lingard justly says, that men such as monks, utterly secluded from the world, were the least calculated to appreciate the merits of the candidates for ecclesiastical dignities. On the vacancy of 1207 the monks of Canterbury clandestinely assembled, and elected their sub-prior to be the head of the Church in England. They dreaded the opposition of the king and the prelates, but they had hope in the character of the pope, and sent their sub-prior to Rome. He divulged the secret; and, upon leaving the kingdom, avowed himself archbishop elect. The monks were alarmed when their proceedings became known, and immediately yielded to the nomination by the king of John de Gray, bishop of Norwich. A deputation of their body was sent to Rome, and they made oath to John that they would support the bishop of Norwich if a fresh election were required. The pope, having decided that the choice was in the monks, in preference to the suffragan bishops, absolved the deputation from their oaths, and set aside the sub-prior and John de Gray. The monks, under the papal direction, chose Stephen Langton, an Englishman of great learning and ability, then a cardinal at Rome. The choice was, eventually, a fortunate one for England; and it might have been wise for the king to have acquiesced. He took the usual course of his wilful and revengeful nature. He seized upon the monastery of Canterbury, banished the monks who remained, and appropriated its revenues. Innocent, it is stated, wrote him conciliatory letters, which John met with angry defiance. In another year the whole kingdom was placed by the pope under an interdict.

We have described the effects of an interdict upon a province.* When

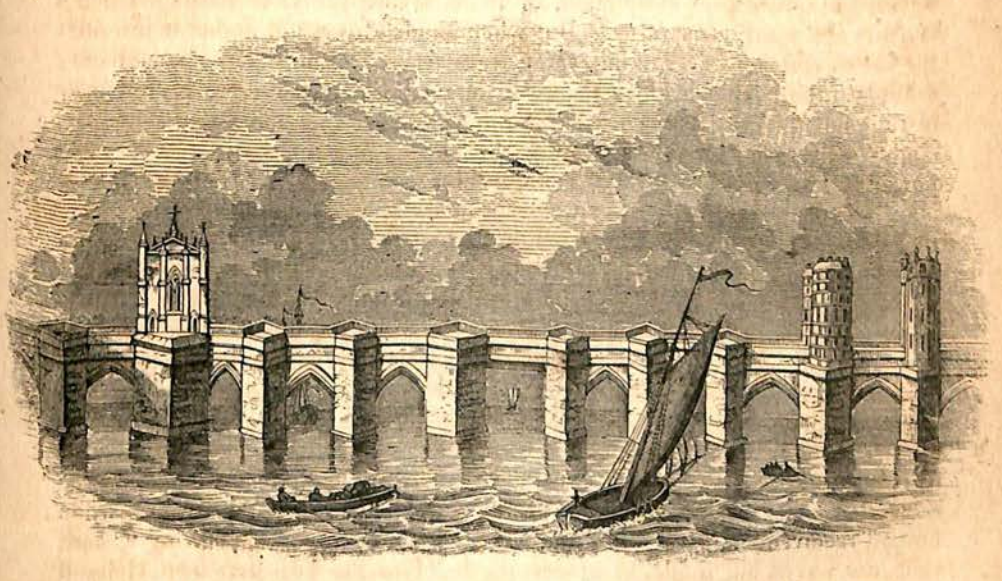
* Page 267.

the bishops of London, Worcester, and Ely, by command of Innocent, pronounced the sentence against all the king's dominions, in Passion Week of 1208, they fled the country. Other bishops quitted their pastoral charge, one only being left in England. The monks and nuns had their religious offices within their own walls, but all the churches were closed to the people. Sermons, indeed, were preached in the churchyards on Sundays; and marriages, during the continuance of this universal interdict, were performed at the church-door, as one chronicler states. This anomalous condition of society lasted more than six years. During this period John appears to have conducted himself with more vigour and decision than at any other part of his reign. He compromised a difference with the king of Scotland, without any actual warfare. He led a great army into Ireland, which had been distracted by the rivalries and oppressions of the proud barons who had been deputed to its administration since the time of Henry II. The presence of the English king, with a powerful force, was held as a blessing by the native chiefs and the body of the people. William de Braiose, who had received extensive grants of land at the beginning of John's reign, conscious of his crimes, hurried to France, leaving his wife and son in the hands of John. A brief entry in the chronicle of Florence of Worcester tells their fate: "Matilda de Braiose and William her son were starved to death at Windsor." The two De Lacys, amongst the most oppressive of the Norman aristocracy in Ireland, also fled to France, and subsisted as labourers in the garden of an abbey. After two or three years, their rank was discovered by the abbot, and through his intercession they were restored to the king's favour. Ireland was, before the visit of John, a prey to those lawless outrages which are invariably the result of tyrannous government. Dublin was peopled, in a great degree by colonists from Bristol, under a grant from Henry II. On some occasion of country festivity at a place called the Wood of Cullen, when many of these citizens were present, a great body of lawless people came down from the Wicklow mountains, and massacred three hundred men, women, and children. Some of the English laws had been introduced by Henry II., and his grants of land were according to the feudal tenures. John originated some useful reforms. He divided the portions of the kingdom in his possession into shires, each with its sheriff and other officers, and he coined the first sterling money circulated in Ireland. A record of the reign of Henry III. says, that king John "brought with him into Ireland discreet men, skilled in the laws, by whose advice he commanded the laws of England to be observed in Ireland." He left John de Gray, bishop of Norwich, as his chief justiciary, a man of talent and discretion. During the troublous future of England in this reign the sister island was tranquil and prosperous.

Irish Silver Penny of John. From a specimen in the Brit. Museum.

The expedition to Ireland was followed next year, 1211, by an attempt to repress the incursions of the Welsh. John advanced to the foot of Snowdon, and there received twenty-eight young men, as hostages, from Llewellyn. During these warlike operations in Ireland and Wales, the interdict had been followed by a sentence of excommunication against John personally. By the

most rigorous watchfulness of the ports its publication was prevented. We have no means of judging of the general social condition of the kingdom during the period when the usual course of its ecclesiastical life was suspended. The marches of the king to Scotland and Ireland and Wales were, doubtless, intended to give occupation to discontented nobles and dangerous men-at-arms. But they were costly. The Jews were, as usual, plundered without scruple; and the memorable expedient of drawing a tooth daily from a Jew at Bristol, until he paid down ten thousand marks, is recorded in connection with the Irish expedition. There is an instrument of John, addressed to the mayor and barons of London, in which he marvels that the Jews have been molested in their city, and says, "You know that the Jews are under our special protection . . . . if we had granted our protection to a dog it ought to be inviolably observed." * The protection of John was like that which was given to Sindbad and his companions by the Magian people, who fed their victims till they became fat and stout, and then served them as meat to their king. What the Jews could not supply was taken from the churches. The industry of the people was little affected by the suspension of religious offices. London bridge—the identical bridge over which thousands now



London Bridge, 1209. Begun 1176.

living have passed—the bridge which stood boldly up against flood and frost for more than six centuries—was finished in 1209, having been thirty-three years in course of erection. John took an interest in the completion of this important work, for in April, 1202, he recommends—in a letter to the mayor and citizens of London, dated from Molineux,—"the renowned Isenbert," by whose diligence the bridges of Saintes and Rochelle were constructed in a

* Hardy, "Patent Rolls," p. 61.

very short time. He has exhorted "his faithful clerk" "to use the same diligence in building your bridge." The renowned Isenbert was one of those accomplished ecclesiastics, who have left enduring works of beauty and utility, but whose names have, in many cases, faded from our national regard. The original architect was Peter Colechurch, a Londoff curate.

The interdict had lasted four years. To suspend the offices of religion through a whole kingdom, at a time when abstract questions of faith had no influence on the actions of men, and there was consequently a nation of faithful sons of the Church, with a very few concealed misbelievers (*miscreants*) —this would appear the very last mode by which the cause of Christianity could be upheld. But Christianity, as we regard it—the highest and holiest principle of human action—the great sustaining power under all the evils of life—the one solid warranty of a life beyond the grave when all shall be judged according to their works,—this was not the simple faith, founded upon the Testament of Christ, which the pope might seem to have endangered when he shut up the churches. If the Holy Scriptures had been accessible to the people—if the habit of private and family worship had been a part of the Christian life of those times—the interdict would have done something to destroy the popular belief in relics, and penances, and mere ceremonial observances, and have swept away much of the falsehood which Wickliffe assailed a century and a half afterwards. But when England was laid under an interdict for the contumacy of the king, the private activity of the clergy would only stimulate the people against the secular power, without risk to the security of the one universal church. It is probable that John himself had not the slightest particle of religious feeling, and that if he could have held his regal power, it was a matter of indifference to him whether his people were Mussulmans or Christians. There is an extraordinary story, believed by some, disbelieved by others, that during the height of his contest with the pope he sent a deputation to Mohammed-al-Nassir, the emir of the Arab provinces of Spain, who was threatening the south of Europe with the extirpation of Christianity, to avow the determination of the king to embrace the Mohammedan faith, on certain conditions. According to the state of his fortunes, and the consequent bent of his mind, John was defiant to the ecclesiastical power, or grovelling at its feet. There is a warrant of his, dated from Normandy in the early part of his reign, in which he says, "Know ye, that we have given licence to Peter Buillo to enter into any religion he pleases." * There is a letter from him to the Seneschal of Gascony, dated from the New Temple in London, in 1214, when he had received the pardon of the pope, in which he says, that having "heard that the execrable infidelity of certain heretics has begun to spread itself anew over your country," he commands the seneschal "to take pains utterly to confound, and entirely exterminate them and their detestable iniquity." † Innocent, the pope, well knew that this man was utterly without any religious principle—was licentious to an extent which disgusted and outraged even those men of power who were not themselves over-scrupulous—and, though rash in provoking danger, and obstinate in encountering it, was ready to make a cowardly retreat when his peril was imminent. For four years, therefore, the pope persevered in the interdict. That it slowly and silently

* Hardy, "Patent Rolls," p. 60. † Ibid., p. 103.

alienated the people from the king cannot be doubted; but John still stood, with an apparent boldness that looks heroical. The interdict had not shaken him. There was one terrible weapon still left in the papal armoury. In 1213 Innocent proceeded to act upon the formal excommunication which he had previously issued, by deposing the king of England, absolving his vassals from their fealty, exhorting all Christian princes and barons to unite in dethroning him, and excommunicating those who held any intercourse with him. Had John been a man boldly and confidingly to throw himself upon his people, it is probable that this outrage would not have been endured by the nobles and freemen of England; for by this excommunication all the ordinary operations of law were suspended. There was impunity for crime. There was no safety for property. Two legates, Pandulph and Durand, had come into England, in 1212, and proclaimed this deposition of the king before a great assembly at Northampton. At this council John is stated to have established, before the legate, what he considered his force of character, by ordering some hostages in his power to be hanged, blinded, or mutilated. The legate, Pandulph, says the chronicler,* was unmoved by this exhibition of power; but when a priest was ordered to be hanged for forgery he rushed out for a candle, to perform the sentence of excommunication, and he consented only to defer this proceeding by the surrender to him of the offending priest. In another year the sentence was pronounced. Dr. Lingard explains how the popes came to assume the power of deposing kings. They were at first contented with spiritual censures; but when all notions of justice came to be modelled upon the feudal principles, it was maintained that sovereigns, who held their fees from God, became traitors by disobedience; that as traitors they ought to forfeit their kingdoms or fees; and that the pontiff, the vicegerent of God upon earth, had the right to pronounce sentence against them for the violation of fealty. We cannot be surprised that John was not prompt in submitting to such an arrogant doctrine. But at length Innocent found a willing instrument to enforce his sublime pretensions to be the sovereign of sovereigns. He promised to grant Philip of France the kingdom; and Philip assembled a great army at Rouen, and an armament of seventeen hundred ships in the Channel, for the invasion of England. John, to do him justice, was not inactive. He issued orders that every ship in his dominions, capable of the freight of six horses, should assemble at Portsmouth; and every man that could bear arms was summoned to the coast of Kent. Instead of waiting for Philip, this fleet crossed the Channel, destroyed many ships at Fecamp, and burned Dieppe. The invasion was postponed by this well-timed boldness. But it was the fate of John never to have the wisdom to use a triumph or to lessen a misfortune. While he awaited at Dover the result of the expedition to the shores of Normandy, the legate Pandulph again arrived. John was now terrified by imaginary dangers as well as by real ones. Pandulph worked upon his fears of Philip, of his own barons, of the churchmen whom his contumacy shut out from their functions and influence. But there was in the depths of that soul, so destitute of real veneration for sacred things, that grain of superstition which terrifies and enfeebles those with whom earnest belief has no consoling and strengthening

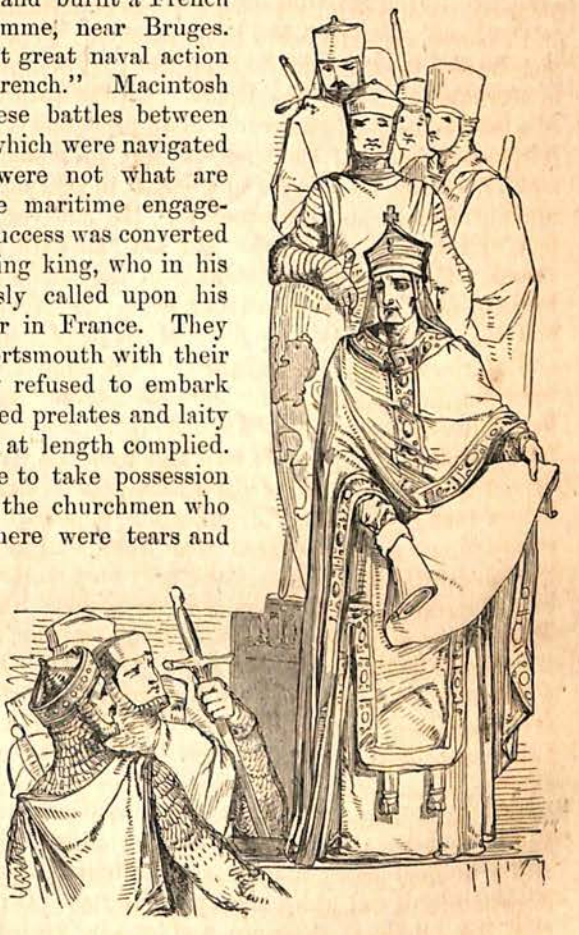
* "Ann. Waverleienses."—See Macintosh, History, vol. i. p. 207.

influence. A fanatic called Peter—the "Peter of Pomfret" of Shakspere—had prophesied that before Ascension-day John would cease to reign. That feast of the Ascension fell on the 16th of May. To avert this danger, he hurriedly submitted to the legate. On the 13th of May he subscribed an instrument by which he promised to obey the pope, in the admission of Stephen Langton to the archbishopric; to recall the exiled bishops, and others who had taken part against him; to reverse outlawries; to make restitution for property unlawfully seized. These conditions being fulfilled, the interdict and excommunication were to be revoked. Four of the most powerful barons guaranteed these stipulations on the part of John. The next day was spent in secret council with the legate. On the 15th of May an act was done, out of whose consequences sprang, in all probability, much of the future civil and religious freedom of England. It was not sufficient for the unstable John to make his peace by a frank submission to the papal demands in the matter of appointment to an archbishopric. He laid the kingdom of England at the feet of the pope of Rome. He took an oath of fealty to the pope as his vassal. He put an instrument into the hands of the legate, subscribed by himself, nine earls, and two barons, by which he granted to Pope Innocent and his successors the kingdom of England and Ireland, to be held of him and of the Roman church in fee, by the annual rent of one thousand marks, reserving to himself and his heirs the administration of justice and the peculiar rights of the crown. Ascension-day came, and John hanged Peter as a false prophet. The people said that he was a true prophet, for that John had ceased to reign in doing fealty to the pope. Dr. Lingard, whilst he acknowledges that the act was "disgraceful," appears to think that the blame of this transaction "must be shared with John by the great council of the barons. his constitutional advisers,—the very men who, two years later, extorted from him the grant of their liberties in the plain of Runnymede." There is a letter extant from an agent of John at Rome, in which he reports to the king that the barons had stated to the pope that to their compulsion was owing the act which had given Innocent his superiority over the English crown. But there are other documents which put this matter in a different point of view. In two letters written by John himself to the pope, after his signing of the great charter, he complains that "the prelates of our realm, by their obstinacy and disobedience, endeavour to frustrate the effects of your pious providence;" and he says, "whereas, before we were disposed to subject ourselves and our realm to your dominion, the earls and barons of England never failed in their devotion to us; *since then, however, and as they publicly avow for that reason,* they have been in continual and violent rebellion against us."* The earls and barons, who extorted the great charter, were acting in strictest concert with "the prelates of the realm;" and it would be satisfactory to believe, as we desire to do upon the authority of this letter, that the measure of the king's iniquities was filled up and overflowing in their view, when he had humbly knelt before the legate of the pope on the 15th of May, 1213, and degraded England to be a fief of the holy see.

Upon the absolute submission of John to the pope's authority, it was notified to Philip of France that the king of England had been received as a

* Hardy, "Patent Rolls," p. 73.

repentant son of the church, and that no attempt must be made upon his dominions. In this disappointment of his ambition Philip unwillingly acquiesced; and proposed to invade England unsupported by any papal encouragement. Ferrand, earl of Flanders, who held this earldom as a vassal of France, refused his consent to join in the invasion; and a war ensued. Ferrand invaded France, and John sent assistance to him from England, in a powerful fleet. There was a signal victory, in which English ships, loaded with armed men, captured and burnt a French fleet. The scene was Damme, near Bruges. Southey calls this "the first great naval action between the English and French." Macintosh more correctly says, "These battles between soldiers embarked in boats which were navigated by seamen or fishermen, were not what are called in modern language maritime engagements." But this partial success was converted into an evil by the misjudging king, who in his elation of spirit imperiously called upon his barons to follow him to war in France. They came at his bidding to Portsmouth with their armed retainers; but they refused to embark till he had recalled the exiled prelates and laity as he had covenanted. He at length complied. Stephen Langton now came to take possession of his see, and with him the churchmen who had fled the kingdom. There were tears and promises on the king's part; but none confided in him. Still the barons refused to sail with him. They said their term of feudal service was expired. They stayed behind, to deliberate upon the grievances of the kingdom, at a council at St. Alban's. They then issued a proclamation, in the royal name, commanding the laws of Henry I. to be observed. When the king found that the barons had not followed him to Jersey, where he waited, he returned in fierce indignation, determined to punish those whom he denounced as traitors. Langton met him, and told him the honest truth that it was not for a king to punish any man without trial, and that the barons were ready to answer in the king's court. The patriotic archbishop convened another council at London, and here he produced what was called the charter of Henry I.—a code of ancient Saxon laws with Norman additions. All those of the council then took an oath to maintain their liberties. In this brief trial of strength the people were roused. The oppressions of several generations had bound



men in a fellowship of suffering. They were now ready for revenge. The mercenaries of John shrank before the bands of bold yeomen who had mighty bows and cloth-yard shafts. But blood was not then spilt. John at length made an attempt to recover a part of the old Plantagenet dominions. In 1214, he landed at Rochelle, and obtained some advantages in Poitou. While he was absent from England, the interdict of the pope had been rescinded. The king had left much discontent behind him; but he had the old false confidence in his reviving fortunes. The alliance which he had formed with Germany and Flanders, and the support of the pope, led him to believe that the time was approaching when he should be duke of Normandy more than in the barren title upon his great seal. Whilst John was in Poitou, France was

Reverse of the Seal of King John.

invaded by troops under the emperor of Germany, the earl of Flanders, the earl of Boulogne; and by English under the earl of Salisbury. Philip met these combined forces, amounting to a hundred and fifty thousand men, with half the number of the chivalry of France. On the 27th of July, a great battle was fought at Bouvines, a village between Lisle and Tournay. It was the greatest battle of those times; and its result was the utter rout of the allied armies, and the overthrow of the hopes of John. He concluded an ignominious truce with Philip, and returned to England in October.

In the train of John came a large body of foreign mercenaries. After an unquiet time of eight months, the king was compelled to write, "We will send out of the kingdom, as soon as peace is restored, all foreign soldiers, cross-bowmen, and stipendiaries, who are come with horses and arms, to the injury of our kingdom." * But he came, in that autumn of 1214, with the

* Magna Charta.

belief that with horses and arms he could be, "for the first time, king and lord of England." These are the words which he is reported to have used when he heard of the death of his justiciary Fitzpeter, who had held John's arbitrary nature under some sort of control. There were now two eminent persons, amongst many other bold and earnest churchmen and laity, who saw that the time was come when no man should be "king and lord in England" with a total disregard of the rights of other men; a time when a king should rule in England by law instead of by force, or rule not at all. Stephen Langton, the archbishop, and William, earl of Pembroke, were the leaders and at the same time moderators, in the greatest enterprise that the nation had yet undertaken. It was an enterprise of enormous difficulty. The pope was now in friendship with the king, and this might influence the great body of ecclesiastics. The royal castles were in possession of the mercenary soldiers. The craft of John was as much to be dreaded as his violence. But there was no shrinking from the duty that was before these patriots. They moved on steadily in the formation of a league that would be strong enough to enforce their just demands, even if the issue were war between the crown and the people. The bishops and barons were the great council of the nation. Parliament, including the Commons, was not as yet, though not far distant. The doctrine of divine right was the invention of an age that sought to overthrow the ancient principle of an elective monarchy, in which hereditary claims had indeed a preference, but in which the sovereign "is appointed to protect his subjects in their lives, properties, and laws, and for this very end and purpose has the delegation of power from the people." So wrote Sir John Fortescue to the young Henry VI. to instruct him in his duties. So thought our Teutonic forefathers. So thought the barons of king John. Such was the opinion of Englishmen, generally, of the foundations of our Constitution, till the prerogative lawyers of the time of the Stuarts came to preach up the rights of arbitrary power; and the most popular historian of England taught that, in what he is always calling rude times, and superstitious times, there was no spirit of freedom to control and balance the many acts of violence and injustice with which the history of our early period commonly deals. Admirably has Mr. Hallam said, "God forbid that our rights to just and free government should be tried by a jury of antiquaries. Yet it is a generous pride that intertwines the consciousness of hereditary freedom with the memory of our ancestors." To these ancestors we owe Magna Charta,—not the result, as some affect to think, of "an uninteresting squabble between the king and his barons," but the assertion of as large principles of liberty as could grow in a practical shape out of the social circumstances of England at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The memorable meeting of Runnymede was preceded by a more solemn meeting; when upon the altar at Saint Edmundsbury, the barons, on the 20th of November, 1214, solemnly swore to withdraw their allegiance from John, if he should resist their claims to just government. They had not only public wrongs to redress, but the private outrages of the king's licentiousness were not to be endured by the class of high-born knights whom he insulted through their wives and daughters. From Saint Edmundsbury the barons marched to London, where the king had shut himself up in the Temple. When their deputies came into his presence, he first despised their claims, and then asked

for delay. The archbishop of Canterbury, the earl of Pembroke, and the bishop of Ely, guaranteed that a satisfactory answer should be given before Easter. The king employed the time in the endeavour to propitiate the Church, by promising a free election of bishops. He took the Cross, and engaged to wage war with the infidels. He sent to Rome, to implore the aid of the pope in his quarrel. And the pope came to his aid; and commanded Langton to exercise his authority to bring back the king's vassals to their allegiance. At Easter, the barons, with a large force, assembled at Stamford. John was at Oxford, and Langton and Pembroke were with him. They were sent by the king to ascertain the demands of their peers; and these messengers, or mediators, brought back the written articles which the king signed at Runnymede. As the archbishop solemnly repeated these demands, John went into a furious passion, and declared that he would never grant liberties which would make himself a slave. The archbishop and the earl took back his refusal.

"The army of God and holy Church," as the barons proclaimed themselves, then advanced upon London, which they entered on the 22nd of May. The citizens had previously agreed to make common cause with them. There is a curious document dated the 20th of May, which exhibits the anger of John at this circumstance, and the pettiness of his revenge: "The king to all his bailiffs and faithful people who may view these letters. Know ye, that the citizens of London in common have seditiously and deceitfully withdrawn themselves from our service and fealty; and therefore we command you that when they or their servants or chattels pass through your districts, ye do offer them all the reproaches in your power, even as ye would to our enemies; and in testimony hereof we send you these our letters patent." * On this 20th of May, John was at Winchester. He then journeyed to Windsor,

* Hardy, "Patent Rolls," p 61.

where he remained from the 31st of May to June 3rd. He then returned to Winchester. On the 10th of June he is again at Windsor, which is his abiding place for a fortnight. On Monday the 15th of June he goes from the adjacent castle to Runnymede. The time and place of meeting was by solemn appointment. The great business of the assembly was accomplished on that day; but we find John at Runnymede on six subsequent days, between the 15th and the 23rd of June. The castle of Windsor was not then on the spot where the flag of England still waves over the proud keep of Edward III. It was on that western side, where a bold tower of the twelfth century now rises up proudly upon the modern street; and where the fortress, protected by its ditch, then looked down upon the broad meadows watered by the Thames, which, flowing round the base of the chalk hill, gave the beautiful name of Windleshora to the beautiful locality. From that fortress goes forth king John. From London has marched the army of the barons. That long low plain of Runnymede, bounded on one side by the Thames, on the other by a gentle line of hills—the island in the river where some hold that the Charter was signed—the gentle aspect of the whole scene —this famous spot speaks only of peace and long tranquillity. In this council-meadow—for Rune-med means the mead of council—king and earl had often met in solemn witan, before the Norman planted his foot on the island. A great mixed race had preserved the old traditions of individual liberty, which belonged to the days before the Conquest. The spirit of the ancient institutions had blended with the feudal principles, and in their joint facility of adaptation to varying states of society, would, practically, be the inheritance of generation after generation. To that great meeting of Runnymede came some citizens of London with the mailed knights. Perhaps there were some servile tenants amongst the crowd, who wondered if for them any blessing would arise out of the differences between the king and their lords. Yet the iron men who won this Charter of liberties dreamt not of the day when a greater power than their own—the power of the burgher and the villan—would maintain what prelate and baron had sworn to win upon the altar of Saint Edmundsbury. Another order of men, who gradually worked their way out of that state in which they were despised or neglected, have kept, and will keep, God willing, what they of the pointed shield and mascled armour won on the 15th day of June, in the year of grace 1215.

Magna Charta, the Great Charter of Liberties, is commonly regarded as the basis of English freedom. This is, to some extent, a misconception. It was a code of laws, expressed in simple language, embodying two principles; —the first, such limitations of the feudal claims of the king as would prevent their abuse; the second, such specification of the general rights of all freemen as were derived from the ancient laws of the realm, however these rights had been neglected or perverted. It contained no assertion of abstract principles of freedom or justice, but met unquestionable evils by practical remedies. To imagine that this charter contained any large views of government that were not consistent with the condition of society at the time of its enactment, is to believe that the men who enforced it, with their swords in their hands, were, to use a modern expression, before their age. If they had been before their age, by any fortuitous possession of greater wisdom, foresight, and liberality, than belonged to their age, that Charter would not have stood up

against the regal power which again and again assailed it. It was built, as all English freedom has been built, upon something which had gone before it. It was not a revolution. It was a conservative reform. It demanded no

Signing of Magna Charta.

limitation of the regal power, which had not been acknowledged, in theory, by every king who had taken the coronation oath. It made that oath, which had been regarded as a mere form of words, a binding reality. It defined, in broad terms of practical application, the essential difference between a limited and a despotic monarchy. It preserved all the proper attributes of the kingly power, whilst it guarded against the king being a tyrant. The feudal monarch was invested with many privileges, as the lord of a body of feudatories; and these privileges, as society gradually assumed a character less and less feudal, became the sources of endless oppressions for several centuries, and were slowly swept away, one by one, in the gradual development of representative government. To have imagined that the barons of Runnymede could have regarded the king simply as the sovereign of the realm, —as the chief magistrate—as the fountain of justice—as the great central point of administration—is to imagine an impossibility. They had feudal interests to regard as a feudal aristocracy. It is both unjust and unwise to consider the barons as mere selfish men, because the Charter provided a remedy for many wrongs that more especially bore upon themselves, in their feudal relations to the king. It limited the royal practice of extracting arbitrary sums under the name of reliefs; of wasting the estates of wards; of disposing in marriage of heirs during minority; and so of heiresses, and of widows. It brought back the right to demand aids strictly to the original conditions of the feudal tenures, which had been perpetually extended at the pleasure of the king. To levy an aid upon the tenants of the crown, in any case beyond the legal ones of the king's personal captivity, the knighthood of his eldest son, or the marriage of his daughter, the consent of the great council of the tenants in chief was necessary.* So also was limited the right to scutage, or

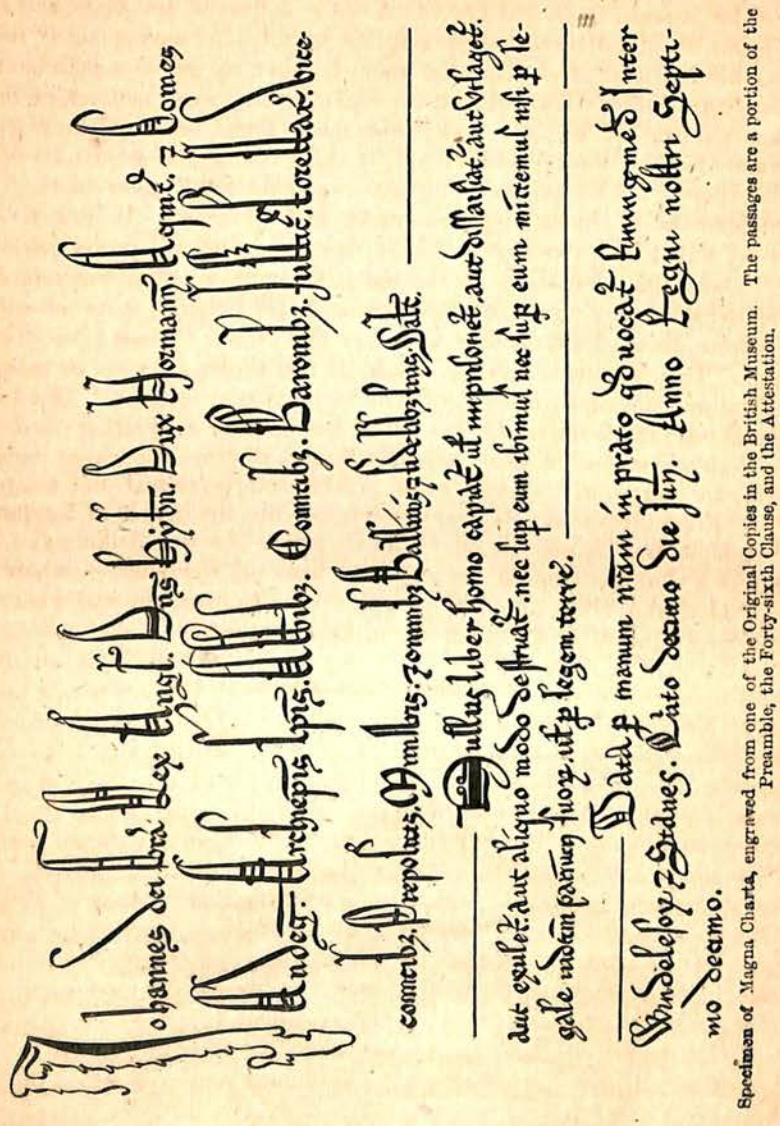
* This clause was subsequently expunged from the Charter by the influence of the Crown.

compensation for knight-service. But at the same time the chief tenants agreed that "every liberty and custom which the king had granted to his tenants, as far as concerned him, should be observed by the clergy and laity towards their tenants as far as concerned them." Such are the principal clauses of the Charter as regards the great body of feudatories, in relation to the crown, and in relation to their sub-tenants. But there were other conditions of more permanent importance, which had regard to the sovereign authority over all men. These were derived from the great Saxon principles of freedom, which a century and a half of Norman power had more or less obliterated, but had not destroyed. A fine old writer upon our Constitution, during the great struggle of the days of Charles I., says, "Never people in Europe have had the rights of monarchy better limited, with the preservation of the subject's liberty, than the English, from this basis." * But that basis, he also says, was contained "in the ancient customs of the kingdom." The Charter was in accordance with the great principle of preservation and progress, by which it has been maintained and extended for more than six hundred years. Let us briefly notice what we derive from this Charter which still belongs to our own time, and is an essential part of the rights of every Englishman. A large portion of the people, the villans and serfs, had little or no participation in the rights which it asserted; but the very assertion hastened a period when all should be equal before the law.

Passing over the clauses of the Charter which protected the tenants and sub-tenants from illegal distresses of the crown,—which attempted to limit the abuse of purveyance, or the right of the king's officers to take necessaries for the royal household, on their own terms,—which prescribed an uniformity of weights and measures,—which protected merchant strangers,—and which confirmed the liberties and free customs of London, and other cities and towns,—let us look at the broad principle of government which is contained in these words;—"No free man shall be taken, or imprisoned, or disseised, or outlawed, or banished, or any otherwise destroyed; nor will we pass upon him, nor send upon him, unless by the legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land. To no man will we sell, to no man will we deny or delay, right or justice." In the charter of Henry III., which was a confirmation of that of John, we find that no man was to be "disseised of his freehold, or liberties, or free customs" by any arbitrary proceeding. Life, liberty, and property were thus protected. No man, from that time, could be detained in prison without trial. No man would have to buy justice. The Charter recognised the Court of Common Pleas, and the circuits of judges of assize, which had been before established. But it put an end to that enormous corruption by which justice was sold, not by mere personal bribery of corrupt ministers of the crown, but by bribing the crown through their hands. The rolls of the Exchequer present constant evidence of sums of money received by the king to procure a hearing in his courts. Some suits, through this corruption, were rendered as protracted and ruinous as those of Chancery in recent years through neglect and vicious formalities. There was a dispute about a marsh between the abbot of Croyland and the prior of Spalding, which lasted through Richard's reign and great part of that of John. The abbot and the

* Twysden on "the Government of England," Camden Society, p. 61.

prior went on during these years outbidding each other to obtain a hearing; and security was at length given for the payment of the bribe, as if the



Specimen of Magna Charta, engraved from one of the Original Copies in the British Museum. The passages are a portion of the Preamble, the Forty-sixth Clause, and the Attestation.

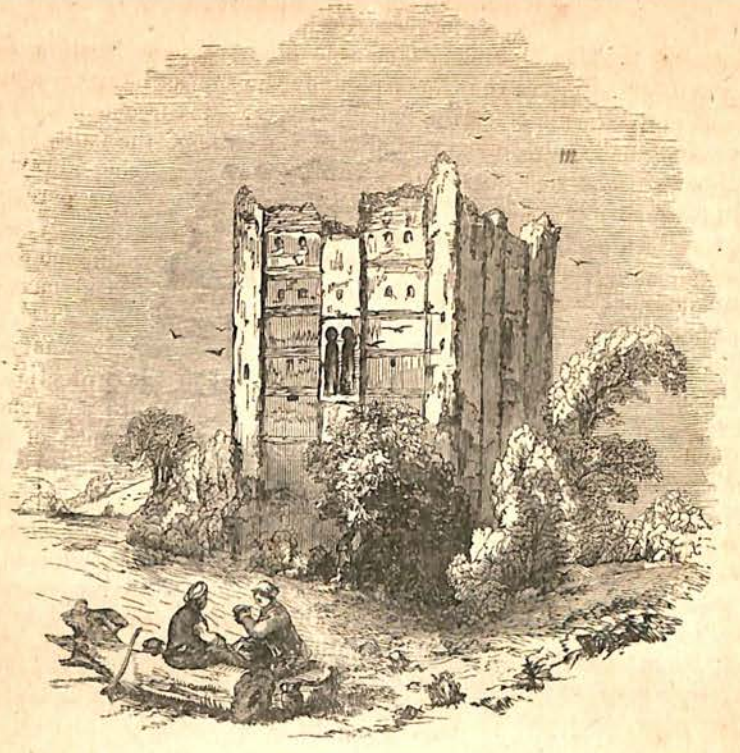
transaction were perfectly regular. It was time that justice should cease to be sold or delayed.

The Great Charter, as we see, in these broad provisions, applied only to free men. A large portion of the people were in the condition of villanage. Some were in a state of slavery. Those who held by servile tenures were thus incidentally mentioned in a clause respecting wardship: "The warder of the lands of such heir who shall be under age, shall take of the land of such heir only reasonable issues, reasonable customs, and reasonable services, and that without destruction and waste of *the men and things*." The men

went with the land as chattels. One sole piece of consideration for the "ascripti glebæ" occurs in the Charter; upon the subject of amerciament, or fines to the king,—the mulcts of the Anglo-Saxons:—"A free man shall not be amerced for a small fault, but according to the degree of the fault, and for a great crime in proportion according to its magnitude: saving alway to the freeman his tenement, and after the same manner saving to a merchant his merchandise. And a villan shall be amerced after the same manner, saving to him his wainage, if he falls under our mercy; and none of the aforesaid amerciaments shall be imposed except by the oath of the good men of the neighbourhood." The expression, "salvo wainagio suo," saves to the villan his implements of husbandry—his carts and ploughs. It was a small privilege; but it indicates that this class was not out of the protection of the law. The specific provisions of the Great Charter went to the remedy of existing evils as they presented themselves in the existing state of society. Generations passed away before villanage and slavery ceased to exist in England. Their abolition was the result of the internal forces, so to speak, of society, and not of sovereign grace or legislative enactment. The barons of England did the work which was called for in their generation; and they left to their successors in the battle for liberty, whether they were noble or plebeian, to carry on the same work in the same practical and temperate spirit. "From this era a new soul was infused into the people of England."* The principle was rooted in our English earth, like the Ankerwyke Yew, which was a vigorous tree on the opposite bank of the Thames, when "the army of God and Holy Church" stood upon Runnymede, and which still bears its green leaf after six hundred and fifty winters.

* Hallam, "Middle Ages."

The Ankerwyke Yew



Guildford Castle.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Provisions for the Observance of the Charter—Movements of John after Runnymede—Crown offered to Prince Louis—Death of John—Accession of Henry III.—Battle of Lincoln—The French quit the country—Death of the Regent, Pembroke—Confirmations of the Charter—The King's assertion of prerogative—Exactions of the King and the Pope—Libels—Royal dignity—Purveyance—Justice sold—The Londoners oppressed—Disaffection of the Londoners—Violations of the Charters—Foreign enterprises—Condition of the Nation—Value of Money—Industry taxed—Great Council at Westminster—Provisions of Oxford—Simon de Montfort—Battle of Lewes—Burgesses summoned to Parliament—Battle of Evesham.

On the 23rd of June, 1215, the deliberations were closed at Runnymede. The securities for the working of the Charter were such as the strong would enforce upon the weak, when the weak was also untrustworthy. Twenty-five barons were to be chosen by the barons assembled, to maintain the observance of the peace and liberties granted and confirmed; so that if the king or his officers violated any of the conditions, four out of the twenty-five barons so chosen might petition for redress of the grievance, and if not redressed within forty days, the cause being laid before the rest of the twenty-five, they, "together with the community of the whole kingdom, shall distrain and distress us all the ways possible; namely, by seizing our castles, lands, possessions, and in any other manner they can, till the grievance is redressed according to their pleasure, saving harmless our own person, and those of our queen and children; and when it is redressed, they shall obey us as before.'

This solemn recognition of the right of levying war upon the king, should he fail in the observance of his promises, appears irreconcileable with any principle of stability in the government; and yet, in dealing with a ruler so perfidious as John, it is difficult to imagine any more sagacious mode of control than that which placed a power of remonstrance in the hands of a few, and then organised a body who should deliberately exercise the right of resistance, as the organ of the national will. Through the whole long and dreary reign of Henry III., a struggle went on for the confirmation and extension of the Charter, which at last ended in civil war. But during that period, in some respects the most important, although the dullest, in our annals, the great body of the people were steadily increasing in numbers and wealth; and in half a century from the memorable days of Runnymede, the commons of England were sitting in parliament with the barons; and redress of grievances, instead of being effected by the taking of royal castles, was enforced by the denial of supplies.

The traditions of the cloister record that John, after signing the Charter retired to the Isle of Wight, and passed three months in the island or at sea. The poet takes up the legend—

> "Here mused the sullen mind, and o'er the deep
> Cast how in blood the scepter'd hand to steep." *

The attestations of John, as traced upon the Patent Rolls, show, on the contrary, that in the last five days of June, 1215, he was at Winchester, and then was moving about, through July, to Marlborough, Devizes, Calne, Cirencester, Clarendon, Corfe Castle, Woodstock, Oxford, and Bridgenorth. At the end of August he is at Sandwich, and through September at Dover and Canterbury. He has important business on the coast of Kent. He is waiting for an army of mercenaries. He has had meetings at Winchester and at Oxford with the barons, who suspected that he was meditating treachery. Gradually numerous bodies of freebooters, from Poitou, from Gascony, from Flanders, from Brabant, landed in the country, and gathered around the king at Dover. Rochester Castle was in the hands of the barons; and John arrived with his army to besiege it. After a siege of eight weeks, it was reduced by famine. The king, with his accustomed ferocity, was about to hang the whole garrison, but was contented with a partial butchery. Thoroughly anti-national, this miserable tyrant is now in his proper element, surrounded by a host of foreign marauders. Wherever he marches, his course is to be tracked by fire and blood. He comes near London; but the attitude of the city is alarming. One great ally he has—the pope. A bull is issued, excommunicating the barons, and annulling the Charter. England, said the insolent mandate, had become a fief of the holy see, and the king of England had no right to surrender the privileges of the crown without the consent of his feudal superior. England replied by utterly despising the authority of the arrogant head of the church, and telling him that in temporal concerns his interference was without any warrant; for that to Peter and his successors the control in ecclesiastical matters had alone been entrusted. There were great statesmen in England in that crisis. There were honest churchmen, who had the hearts of patriots. Stephen Langton, the arch-

* "The Fair Island," by Edmund Peel.

bishop, was one of these. He refused to excommunicate the disobedient barons, and was, of course, suspended from his functions. The king, thus supported, saw no impediment in the way of crushing the young liberties of the people under his iron heel, and of surrendering the independence of the church to the insolent power of Rome. The country was over-run by his fierce mercenaries. He marched to the north with a determination to recover his authority by the terrors of a wide-spreading desolation, without one passing thought of justice or mercy. As he entered Scotland, in revenge for the alliance which its king, Alexander II., had formed with the barons, he burned the abbeys without distinction, and having rested at a village, set fire with his own hand, when he departed in the morning, to the house in which he had slept the previous night. In the south the same work of terror went forward, under the command of John's illegitimate brother, the earl of Salisbury. The barons despaired of their cause, for the people fled before these hell-hounds, abandoning home and property rather than perish under the hands of relentless torturers. Their leaders came at last to a desperate resolution. They offered the crown to Louis, the eldest son of the king of France. To us, who can scarcely place ourselves in a position for justly appreciating the men of the thirteenth century, this resolve appears impolitic. It appeared so to Shakspere; although he makes allowance for the "infection of the time" that compelled "the sons and children of this isle" to "fill up her enemies' ranks." It was a dangerous experiment; but it was surrounded by as many safeguards as could reasonably be attempted. Louis advanced some pretensions to a title to the English crown, in the right of his wife, Blanche, the niece of John. The pretension was frivolous; but it was maintained before the pope, upon the ground that John had been attainted of treason in the court of his brother Richard, and had been adjudged a felon in the court of the peers of France; and that his children, being born after these condemnations, were divested of all rights which their father had previously forfeited. Innocent was too adroit to be deceived by such representations, and proceeded to excommunicate Louis and his supporters. But the young prince was not willing to give up the prize which had been presented to his ambition. John is at Dover with his mercenaries in great force, in May, 1216. We trace him on the Kentish coast from the 27th of April to the 20th of May. Then, as the French fleet appears in sight, he commences a retreat upon Winchester, ravaging the country after his usual custom. On the 30th, Louis lands at Sandwich, reduces Rochester, and marches upon London, where he is received in solemn procession, and is paid the homage of the barons and the citizens, he swearing to govern justly, to defend them against their enemies, and to restore them to their rights and possessions. There can be no doubt that Louis was the object of popular enthusiasm. His career was for some time a triumph. But John held the fortresses. The delays in reducing them gave hopes to the cause of the English king. Dover and Windsor offered a prolonged resistance to the forces of Louis and the barons. The castle of Guildford, whose ruined keep still crowns the south side of that flourishing town, was also besieged. The king's character,—so hateful to the people that its odium survived till the days of Richard II., when the insurgents enforced an oath that no king of the name of John should be allowed to reign in England—that character was a

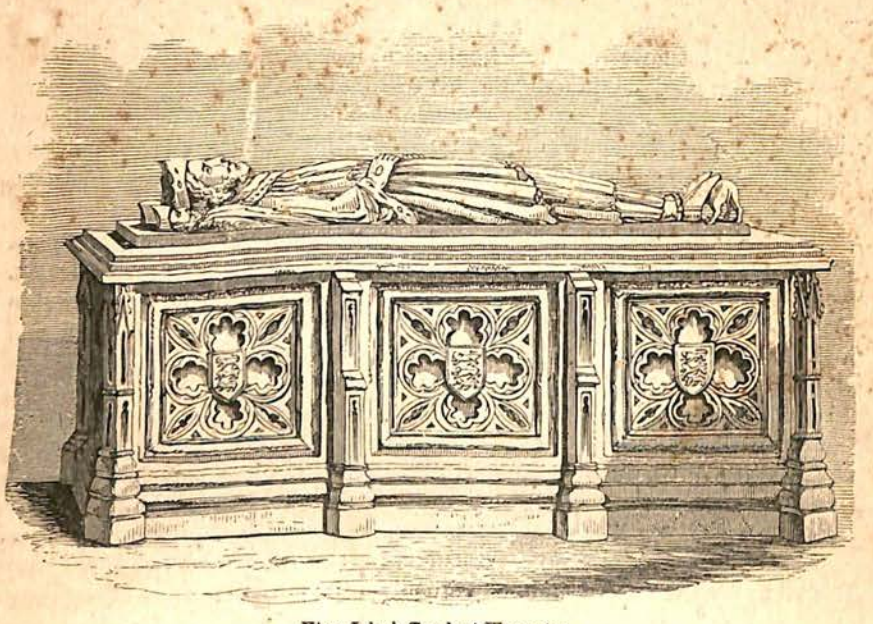
tower of strength to his enemies. Even at this time of difficulty by new outrages he had driven his own brother, Salisbury, to the camp of his assailants. But the rule of a foreign prince, so called in to protect a people against a native tyrant, is always open to doubt and suspicion. It was so in the case of that wise and honest foreigner who was summoned to the English throne, in very different times, but for the same object of asserting the right of a people to just government. Louis of France soon lost the confidence of those who had placed the kingdom at his feet. He began to dispense honours and possessions to his own countrymen. The report of the death-bed confession of the Viscount de Melun, that the French prince meant to destroy those who had been most strenuous against John, obtained credence. There was disunion in the camp of the confederates. A long and doubtful struggle might have taken place, in which England might have been driven back a century, had not the tyrant been suddenly called to his last dread account. On the 2nd of October he is at Lincoln; on the 3rd and 4th at Grimsby; on the 5th at Boston; on the 7th and 8th at Spalding; on the 9th, 10th, and 11th at King's Lynn, so called from his favour to that port. On the 12th of October he has marched to Wisbeach. He resolves to cross the Wash—that estuary which the Romans made passable by embanked roads, and which at low water might be safely travelled over. Part of the army had securely crossed. But the tide was flowing in. The river Welland was descending in a strong current. At a spot still known as King's Corner, between Cross Keys Wash and Lynn, the king's baggage-waggons, his sumpter horses—all the moveables of a royal army—treasures, provisions, armour, clothes—were swallowed up by the waters, and John stood, on the northern shore of the Wash, helpless and despairing. He proceeded, the same night, to the Cistercian abbey of Swineshead. Fatigue and anguish of mind brought on a fever. On the 15th he mounted his horse to continue his march; but was obliged to be placed in a litter, and was borne to Sleaford. The next day he was carried to the castle of Newark; and he there died on the 18th of October. The story of his being poisoned by a monk is apocryphal; but poetry has made the legend its own truth:—

> "Poison'd,—ill-fare;—dead, forsook, cast off:
> And none of you will bid the winter come,
> To thrust his icy fingers in my maw:
> Nor let my kingdom's rivers take their course
> Through my burn'd bosom; nor entreat the north
> To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lip
> And comfort me with cold." *

The death of John was a providential event for England. The surfeit of peaches and new cider, or the poison of a monk, or the mere fatigue and anxiety of the passage of the Wash, either of these attributed causes of his last illness rescued the country from a great dilemma. On one hand was an insufferable tyrant, too faithless for any legal rule, but strong enough to make a successful attempt to fasten the old chains upon the people, in his appeal to their national feelings against a foreign yoke. On the other hand was an ambitious young prince who, if he had won the country, would have regarded it as a fief of France, and would have smothered the growth of a great

* King John, Act v. Scene 7.

independent kingdom. Fortunately there were wise statesmen at that crisis who knew their duty. A boy of ten years old, for such was Henry III., might be held in subjection by those who desired the secure establishment of a just government, that should equally avoid the dangers of an oligarchical rule



King John's Tomb at Worcester.

and the despotism of one unbridled ruler. But the first business was to free the land from the foreigner. It was a difficult and delicate enterprise. It required great energy and firmness. It could only be accomplished by prudent pacification after successful war. Louis was not likely easily to forego the power he had partially attained; and it was not, at a time when public opinion was so imperfectly brought to bear upon the interests of adverse factions, the mere upraising of the banner of a native boy-king that would turn away nobles and knights in arms from their mistaken resolve "to follow unacquainted colours here." To the earl of Pembroke, who had adhered to the fortunes of John, England chiefly owed the release in a year or two from the dominion of the stranger.

The rhyming chronicle of Robert of Gloucester thus records the accession of Henry III.:—

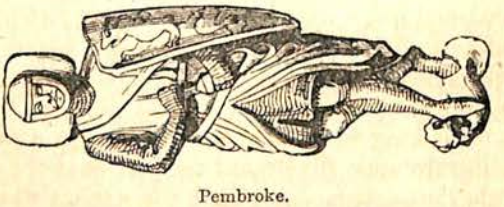
> "Henry was *king imad*, after is fader Jon,
> A Sein Simonides day and Sein Jude at Gloucestre anon."

The feast of Saint Simon and Saint Jude was on the 28th of October. After the burial of John at Worcester, it was an easy march to Gloucester. The form of coronation by which the king was "made" was hastily gone through. A fillet of gold was placed on the child's head, for the crown had been lost in the fatal crossing of the Wash. Gualo, the pope's legate, performed this office. The usual oaths were administered, and homage to the pope was exacted. Three

English bishops stood around, with a few nobles. On the 11th of November, at a great council held at Bristol, Pembroke was chosen regent—"Rector regis et regni." Some of the adherents of John had considered that the Great Charter had swept away too many of the ancient rights of the crown, and some of the clauses so objected to were reserved for future consideration. But in its essential spirit it remained unaltered. Those who had called in a foreign prince to maintain that Charter which John would have annulled, were thus conciliated. The supporters of Louis gradually fell off. The principle of nationality was successfully appealed to; for the name of Englishman was one of which the high-born were now proud—that name which a century earlier was spoken by the Norman with scorn and derision. Gualo, the legate, brought his spiritual weapons to the support of the new government, by excommunicating Louis himself, and all who adhered to him. Hostilities between the armies went on till Christmas was at hand, when a truce till Easter was agreed to. Louis hurried to France, and came back with reinforcements; but he found that a spirit of dislike to his pretensions had grown up in the nation. The regent had been active in winning over the most formidable barons, and there was a general confidence in his honour and sagacity. The foreign army came to be regarded, not as the deliverers of the English from a native tyranny, but as plunderers whose excesses could not be endured by a free people. The Londoners, however, continued to adhere to the prince who had come to their succour; although the endurance of their fidelity was constantly threatened by agitation and conspiracy. At last a decisive battle was fought at Lincoln. At the end of April in 1217, the Count of Perche, with six hundred knights and twenty thousand men—"wicked French freebooters," as a chronicler calls them,—marched from London to besiege the castle of Lincoln, which was held by the king's party. Pembroke called out the tenants of the crown, and he marched from Newark with a resolute band, who had been invested with a sacred character by the legate. Having been promised the privileges of crusaders they advanced with white crosses sewed on their breasts. The French army was within the walled town; but the castle held out, being bravely defended by Nichola de Camville, the widow of its hereditary governor. Had the Count of Perche taken the open field against Pembroke's small army, the superiority of the French cavalry might have prevailed over the English bowmen. But Pembroke boldly entered the town whilst a sortie was made from the castle; and in the narrow streets, where the horse could not act with advantage, a merciless slaughter ensued, and the French army surrendered to the inferior numbers. The Count of Perche had fallen, refusing to accept of quarter. This victory, which from its easy accomplishment was called "The Fair of Lincoln," was grossly abused by the royalists. The city, which had resolutely adhered to the cause of the barons, was given up to pillage; and many of the wretched inhabitants perished in their flight over the Witham.

This victory of the 20th of May might not have decided the contest, had it not, within three months, been followed up by a great naval success. Under the command of a famous pirate, Eustace the Monk, an armament of eighty large vessels put to sea from Calais, on the 24th of August, for the purpose of effecting a landing on the Thames, to aid Prince Louis. Hubert de Burgh, the justiciary, a resolute and able man, collected forty vessels in

the Cinque Ports, and boldly set sail from Dover to meet the invaders. The contest was a singular one, if we may credit the statement that De Burgh caused powdered quick-lime to be scattered in the air, which the wind carried into the faces of his enemies. The boarding-axes of the English were, as we may well believe, much more formidable than the quick-lime. The victory was complete. From that day the cause of Louis was hopeless. The regent was too high-minded to exact severe terms from his opponent. On the 11th of September a treaty was signed, on an islet of the Thames, near Kingston. An amnesty, with a participation in all privileges, was granted to the English adherents of Louis; he and his followers were absolved from all spiritual censures; and he was conducted to the coast by the earl of Pembroke. Roger of Wendover says that Louis received five thousand pounds to meet his necessities. Others record that the citizens of London lent him the money. Henry's government appears to have held out promises of large sums to insure his quiet departure.* But some months elapsed before the kingdom settled into peace. Whilst Pembroke strictly observed the conditions of the treaty, the pope's legate pursued the clergy who had favoured the French, with a most vindictive spirit; and the banishment of these excommunicated clerks was insisted upon in the following spring. Some of the castles that had been taken by leaders of the royalists were forcibly retained by them; and the accustomed pillage of the people by the armed bands that always harassed the country in troublesome times, went forward, till the laws again maintained their supremacy. Unfortunately for the country, the regent Pembroke died in 1219. But by his moderation and love of justice the Charter of John was now perfected by a Charter of the Forests, in which the terrible penalties for destroying the king's deer were abolished, and the



Pembroke.

milder punishments of fine or imprisonment were substituted. Pembroke left a noble example to English statesmen of the principle upon which the blessing of just laws could alone be made permanent—a constant reparation, instead of a sweeping change. The Charter and its subsequent improvements were essentially practical reforms; and thus they resisted every attempt to overturn them, during a coming century of struggle, and stood boldly up, equally strong against a weak Henry or a powerful Edward. Pembroke bestowed the Charter upon Ireland; and provided that it should live in the popular mind of England, by being read periodically in the county courts.†

Upon the death of Pembroke, Hubert de Burgh succeeded to the regency. His nature, unlike that of Pembroke, did not rise above the tyranny and cruelty of his times. He repressed disorders with unrelenting severity; and

* Close Rolls, Feb. 12, 1218.

† The monument of Pembroke is still to be seen in the Temple Church of London

he obtained, in 1223, a bull from the pope, declaring Henry competent to do all royal acts; which bull was followed by a disposition to encourage a neglect of the charters in the king's officers. But a remedy was arising out of the condition of the people. The clause of Magna Charta which said, "No scutage or aid shall be imposed in our kingdom, unless by the common council of our kingdom," raised the power of the purse above the power of the sword; for although this clause was omitted in the Charters of Henry III., neither aid nor escuage were "exacted at discretion, throughout his reign." * The nation, generally, appears to have possessed some acknowledged restraining power over the royal lavishers of earlier times, and when it was asked by the king to give "aid," it took care to demand some right in return. For half a century of the days of Henry III., our history is one continuous record of money obtained by redress of grievance. But it is also a record of many arbitrary tallages upon the industrious classes, especially of London, which the king made in the absence of any right of general taxation. Yet, at every new extortion, there was a correspondent weakening of the power to extort. Hume says, of the reign of Henry III., "What mortal could have the patience to write or read a long detail of such frivolous events as those with which it is filled, or attend to a tedious narrative which would follow, through a series of fifty-six years, the caprices and weaknesses of so mean a prince as Henry?" But if those caprices and weaknesses, those frivolous events, be a mirror of the state of society, they cease to be tedious, and may be as instructive in the prolix annals of Matthew Paris, as the glorious victories of a later period in the fervid strains of Sir John Froissart. It is in the pages of the monk of St. Albans that we may trace the growing influence of a national opinion. "Pass," says Mr. Hallam, "but from the history of Roger de Hoveden to that of Matthew Paris, from the second Henry to the third, and judge whether the victorious struggle had not excited an energy of public spirit to which the nation was before a stranger. The strong man, in the sublime language of Milton, was aroused from sleep, and shook his invincible locks."

In 1225, when the king was nineteen years of age, a common council was summoned to deliberate upon the urgent necessities of the crown for supplies. Hubert de Burgh, the justiciary, set forth the wrongs which had been done in the seizure of domains in France that belonged to the English crown, and asked an aid of a fifteenth upon all personal estates. The aid was granted, under very strict limitations as to the mode in which it was to be used; but it was also required that the Charter should be confirmed for a third time. In the form in which it was passed in that year, it still holds a place as the first statute of the English statute law. The collection of the subsidy was immediately enforced; but no foreign successes were the result. In 1227, the king declared himself of age, and set up his prerogative above the Charters in these words: "Whensoever, and wheresoever, and as often as it may be our pleasure, we may declare, interpret, enlarge, or diminish, the aforesaid statutes, and their several parts, by our own free will, and as to us shall seem expedient for the security of us and our land." Had there been a man of deeds, and not of words, upon the throne, this declaration might have put

* Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 331.

England, even at this hour, into the same condition as that of less fortunate countries, whose kings may interpret, enlarge, or diminish laws by their own free will. But, amongst the great nations of Europe, England stands almost solitary in the assertion which a judge of the time of Henry III. proclaimed—

Matthew Paris.

"The king must not be subject to any man, but to God and the law, for the law makes him king. Let the king, therefore, give to the law what the law gives to him, dominion and power; for there is no king where will, and not law, bears rule." * Let no Englishman, who lives under the rule of law, and not of will, forget that this privilege has been derived from a long line of forefathers; and that, although the eternal principles of justice depend not upon the precedents of ages, but may be asserted some day by any community with whom a continued despotism has made them "native, and to the manner born," we have the security that the old tree of liberty stands in the old earth, and that a short-lived trunk has not been thrust into a new soil, to bear a green leaf or two, and then to die.

When this resolved young king, whose "free will" was henceforth to be

* Bracton, quoted in Hallam, vol. ii. p. 334.

the guide "for us and our land," had taken his affairs into his own hands, he undertook an expedition into Wales, from which he quickly returned. The next year, he collected an army for the invasion of France; but suddenly quarrelled with his minister, De Burgh, and dispersed his troops. In 1230, he received homage in Poitou and Gascony. From that time, foreigners became his favourites. His quarrel with his able but unscrupulous justiciary, De Burgh, now assumed a formidable character; and, after a violent contest, the minister lost his power. The king's chief minister is now Peter de Roches, the bishop of Winchester; and he and his foreign adherents are

hateful to the English nobles, and the nation is again on the point of civil war. In 1234, De Roches and the Poitevins are dismissed. Henry then enters into the trade of kingship upon his own account. With him, the royal office was indeed a trade. History presents him in scarcely any other light than that of an extortioner or a beggar. Matthew Paris, who has been accused of collecting and preserving "every malicious and scandalous anecdote that could gratify his censorious disposition," * might not be entirely relied upon for this prominent feature of Henry's character and times, but the records of the Exchequer abundantly show, that, for forty years, "there were no contrivances for obtaining money so mean or unjust that he disdained to practise them." † But it was not only the king who was pressing upon the capital of the English nation. The pope had a more than equal share of the spoil. Henry consented to the pontiff plundering the church, till he found that large revenues could not be abstracted from the kingdom without lessening his own resources. As long as he had a due share, the king encouraged the plunderer. The monks said—"When the wolf and the shepherd confederate, it bodes ill for the flock." Which was the wolf and which the shepherd?

* Lingard, History, vol. iii. p. 216. 8vo.
† Edinburgh Review, March, 1821.

Though the age of Henry III. was not an age of printing, it was an age when straws thrown up showed which way the wind blew. There were songs and squibs in those days, which were current in the citizen's hall and the monk's refectory. Some of these have come down to us in Latin rhymes, in Anglo-Norman, and in almost intelligible English. The songs of this period evidently point to a condition of comparative prosperity, for they abound with denunciations against the money-getters. In one of these, the theme is universal bribery.* It is a Latin poem, with a cento of quotations. In the Anglo-Norman "Song of the Church,"—

> "Li rois ne l'apostoile ne pensent altrement,
> Mès coment au clers tolent lur or e lur argent." †

In another Latin song of the same age, we are told, in macaronic rhyme, that "the poor man, who possesses little, must be spoiled of his property to enrich the wealthy." In one of these wicked Anglo-Norman libels, the king is laughed at, with an evident knowledge of character, in a way that shows there is nothing new in the irreverence of wit for high station. His sapient majesty is made to say, "I will take Paris, that is quite certain; I will set fire to the river which is called Seine; I will burn the mills, and it will be a terrible thing if they have no bread to eat all the week." ‡ The sober chroniclers come and show us that the libellers are not untrue historians. We have no record that Henry punished the satirical ballad-makers; but, in the third year of the reign of his son, a statute was passed against "devisors of tales, whereby discord, or occasion of discord, hath many times arisen between the king and his people, or great men of this realm." The monk of St. Alban's, who, no doubt, picked up many stray stories and odd scraps of news from "devisors of tales," and read his laborious chronicle for the entertainment of his brethren, was fortunate in having been before the statute of 1275 in its publication.

The monk of St Alban's does not say soft things of the government he lived under. In 1236, Henry married Eleanor, the daughter of the Count of Provence. The nuptial festivities were of extraordinary splendour. The citizens of London, especially, came forth with all the pomp of their municipal luxury, in mantles worked in gold, and carrying gold and silver cups as they rode in troops on their newly-caparisoned horses. In 1239, the queen bore a son, Edward; and then the streets were illuminated, whilst bands of dancers made the night joyful with drum and tambourine. But Henry, according to Matthew Paris, was not satisfied with barren rejoicings. He sent out messengers to ask for presents, into city and into country. They came back. If well loaded the king smiled. If the gift were small, it was rejected with contempt. "God gave us the child," said a Norman, "but the king sells him to us." In 1251, he went about seeking hospitality of "abbots, friars, clerks, and men of low degree, staying with them, and asking for gifts." The chronicler, two years before this, has recorded that Henry shamelessly transgressed the bounds of royal dignity, by exacting New Year's gifts from

* "Contra avaros." Political Songs, published by Camden Society, p. 27.

† Ibid. page 43. "The king and the pope think of nothing else but how they may take from the clergy their gold and their silver."

‡ Ibid., p. 67.

the citizens of London. "Lend me a hundred pounds," said the king to the abbot of Ramsay; and the abbot replied, "I have sometimes given, but never lend," and so went to the money-lenders, and borrowed it, "that he might satisfy the wants of this beggar-king." But not unfrequently, as we learn from a remonstrance of parliament in 1248, the king rose above the meanness of the beggar to do the more legitimate work of the robber. "He seized by force on whatever was used in the way of meat and drink—especially wine, and even clothes—against the will of those who sold these things." Matthew Paris does not explain the nature of these seizures; but we imagine they were made under the old despotic system of purveyance, although that was expressly regulated in the Great Charter. The chronicler adds, "even on the sea coast he tyrannises and oppresses to such a degree, that he does not allow the herrings and other fish to be disposed of at the will of the poor fishermen." But these exactions were more contemptible than destructive to the good order of the realm. This weak king, whose grandfather, however despotic, had worthily laboured to make the sources of justice pure, was himself the great fountain of corruption. His justiciaries went forth on their regular circuits, not for the punishment of offenders, but to compound for offences. In 1240, "under the pretence of administering justice, they collected an immense sum of money for the use of the king, who squandered away everything." He sent forth inquisitors of the forests, who not only ruined all those who had encroached upon the forest borders, but also impoverished many, even those of noble birth, "for a single small beast,

Fishing with a Seine Net.

a fawn, or hare, although straying in an out-of-the-way place." The Jews, according to the custom of the age, were lawful plunder; and Henry, as regarded them, did not depart from the pious usage of his father. But he did more than any of his predecessors in the spoil of the Israelites. He sold them, as he would a farm, to his brother Richard.

The city of London, in the middle of the 13th century, was a great commercial port, carrying on trade with the ports of the Channel, with Flanders and Germany, and with some parts of Italy. The merchants of Almaine, as they were called in the charter of the 44th of Henry III., had their hall in London, afterwards known as the Steel-yard. They were large importers of grain, flax and hemp, of pitch, of steel. Tin was imported, in 1241, from Germany at a lower rate than the tin of Cornwall. London was

flourishing. Her merchants were rich. Henry sometimes begged from them and sometimes trafficked with them. The confirmation of the city's charter generally followed an aid; but that form cost nothing, and was proportionably agreeable to the king. The bargaining for an exchange of some real article of value for a money payment was a very unpleasant affair to him. The Londoners, in 1248, bought his jewels, when Henry thus expressed himself: "I know that if the treasure of Augustus were for sale, these ill-bred Londoners would suck it all up. They call themselves barons, indeed. They possess a surfeit of riches. That city is an inexhaustible well." And so he constantly dipped his bucket into the well. He had always some petty revenge in store for fancied injuries. He asked the abbots of all the Cistercians for a year's value of their wool; for on the downs around their solitary abbeys the nibbling flocks were their principal riches. The monks averred that such a demand would be their ruin, and refused the payment! The king had the prerogative of regulating commerce, and he forbade the Cistercians to export their wool. The fleeces remained in the Cistercians' lofts, but the wines of Germany were not in their cellars, and the broadcloths of Flanders were not in their wardrobes. The exchange of England's great staple commodity for the commodities which other lands produced cheaper and better, was stopped for the unhappy monks. Henry had a device for the punishment of the Londoners, to be obtained by an abuse of his royal prerogative of interference with trade. The fairs of England, in the days when regular commercial communication between producers and consumers was imperfectly established, were of immense importance to the inhabitants of remote districts. They were specially provided for in the charters of large towns; and to these marts came, once a year, or more frequently, traders and customers from all parts. At the fairs, the religious houses laid in their stores of wax for their altars and of malt for their breweries; and the nobles sent their purveyors to look out for brass vessels and pottery, for fine drapery and costly silks. But the fairs were, at the same time, a great source of oppression to the regular traders of the towns, for during their continuance the shops were shut, and all other trade was suspended. Henry, in 1248, resolved to establish a fair at Westminster. The bishop of Winchester derived a large revenue from his fair on Saint Giles' Hill, near that city; for while it lasted, during sixteen days, all other traffic was suspended for seven miles round, and all merchandise coming to the fair paid toll to the bishop.* The example was a tempting one; and so Henry proclaimed, at the feast of Saint Edward, in October, that a fair should be held at Westminster for a fortnight; that all fairs throughout the land should be suspended for that period; and that all traffic in London should be given over for these fourteen days, that the Westminster fair might be better supplied with merchandise. The bishop of Ely had his own fair at this season; and he stoutly remonstrated with the king: but to no purpose. And so, on the 13th of October, the day of the Saxon king and Confessor, for whose equal laws the people had been clamouring for two centuries, the king, holding his office under a charter of liberties, stops the traffic of a great city abundantly supplied with all commodities, and compels

* See Warton's "History of English Poetry." Vol. ii., p. 115. Park's edition.

its merchants to bring their wares to the muddy precincts of the royal palace. The great abbey church was now rising into its present beauty, upon the ruins of the Saxon building. Round the hall of Rufus, by the margin of the river and the fields of the west, was a large encampment; and under tents was exposed the precious merchandise of London, brought thither from the comfortable shops where each craft had its separate station. It was a time of rain and wind. The tents were soaked through; the goods rotted; the shivering traders crouched in the swampy soil; and, says Matthew Paris, "those who were accustomed to sit down to their meals, in the midst of their families by the fireside, knew not how to endure this state of want and discomfort." From his exactions and caprices, there grew up a deadly hatred between the Londoners and their king. The temper of the citizens began to look alarming. So, in 1250, he assembled them and their families in Westminster Hall, and "humbly, and as if with rising tears, entreated that each and all of the citizens would with mouth and heart forgive him for his anger, malevolence, and rancour towards them." His real or pretended contrition was, probably, as damaging to him as the remembrance of his fines, his unpaid loans, and,—worst of all his offences,—his decrees for pulling down the posts and chains of the city, whenever he feared a riot and a barricade. Riots there frequently were between the retainers of the court and the sturdy apprentices of the craftsmen. In the Lent of 1253, the young men of the city were playing at the manly game of the quintain, a contrivance for training horsemen in the use of the lance, by placing a board revolving on a pivot fixed on a high post, of which Stow says,—"I have seen a quintain set upon Cornhill, by the Leaden Hall, where the attendants on the lords of merry disports have run, and made great pastime; for he that hit not the broad end of the quintain was of all men laughed to scorn, and he that hit it full, if he ride not the faster, had a sound blow in his neck with a bag full of sand hung on the other end." * In the Lent of 1253 came the king's pages and attendants from Westminster to the civic sports; and they insulted the young horsemen, "calling them rustics, and scurvy and soapy wretches," and then entered the lists to oppose them. The Londoners grew furious, and hurled the courtiers from their horses, and sent them back in great grief to the king at Westminster. The city had to pay a thousand marks for the outrage. Certainly these citizens were too much inclined to take the law into their own hands. Queen Eleanor was exceedingly distasteful to them. She was, no doubt, a woman of extraordinary energy, and stimulated her weak husband to many of those violations of the charter which, in his hands, became the most wretched meannesses. The queen had a perpetual quarrel with the citizens about the claim that all vessels navigating the Thames should unlade at Queenhithe, and there pay to her heavy dues. During Henry's absence in Gascony, in 1253, she was Lady Keeper of the Great Seal; and, with that power, vigorously enforced her dues, and committed the two sheriffs to prison for their resistance to the payment of what she termed "queen-gold." She had wounded the citizens in the tenderest place; and thus, in 1264, in passing through London Bridge in her barge, she was assailed with cries of "Drown the witch!" and was pelted with mud and stones. Her son

* "Survey of London."

Edward never forgave this outrage upon his mother; and he found the opportunity for a terrible revenge at the battle of Lewes.

In looking at the arbitrary acts of the crown at this period, we see at once how contrary they are to the spirit of the Charter, and we naturally ask if that statute, so often confirmed, was a dead letter. King Henry constantly infringed the liberties of cities and boroughs; he amerced freemen for faults, not according to the measure of their offences, but according to his own rapacity; his constables and bailiffs took corn and chattels from men without present payment; he sold justice, he denied justice, he deferred justice; he frightened merchants from the kingdom by his illegal exactions; he maintained the old evil customs of the forests. These things were direct violations of the Charters. The parliament, for so the great council has begun to be called, is constantly remonstrating. In 1242 it refuses a supply, when the king desires to go to Poitou, with a sum of money to carry on the war against the French. The nobles refuse the subsidy, but scold the king, "with great bitterness of spirit." In this proceeding we trace the English jealousy of the Poitevins, who had excited Henry to this war; and the result of the king's expedition is the total loss of Poitou. In 1243, Henry comes back to an exhausted treasury, which the clergy and the Jews are called upon to refill. In 1244, the pope sets up a rival extortioner to the royal tax-gatherer, in the person of Master Merton, who demands rich gifts, and seizes upon vacant benefices. The king remonstrated with Innocent IV.; the parliament despatched messengers to Rome with remonstrance; but the pope defied the king and his parliament, threatened the kingdom with an interdict, and "although the king was previously prepared to stand up for the freedom of the kingdom and the church," says Matthew Paris, "yet he now yielded, his resolution being broken." In 1248, another parliament rated and threatened the king about his lavishness to foreigners, his abuses of purveyance, his injuries to the church, his appointment of officers who did not seek the advancement of the common weal, but only their own especial benefit. They refused the required supply; and then came new extortions. In 1252, the king adopts a bolder measure. He called a parliament, and produced a mandate of the pope, by virtue of which he demanded the tithes of the church for three years, that he might accomplish his oft-repeated vow of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The bishops and the nobles agree in their refusal. In the October of this year he again commands his fair to be held at Westminster; and multitudes travel thither, it being again a rainy season, when the bridges had given way, and the fords were scarcely passable. These crowds of strangers, mingling with the discontented citizens, talked of the wrongs of the people. "During all this time," says Paris, "angry feelings were aroused, and hatred increased against the pope and the king, who favoured and abetted each other in their mutual tyranny; and all, being in ill-humour, called them the disturbers of mankind." In 1253, the aspect of the kingdom is becoming serious. A parliament was held, at which the wish of the king for a grant to enable him to undertake the crusade was again debated; but being conceded, the expenditure was to be "at the discretion of the nobles;" and the king promised, in all good faith, that he would strictly observe the Great Charter, and all its conditions. A remarkable scene then ensued. The archbishop of Canterbury pronounced the sentence of excommunication against "all

violators of the liberties of the church, or the ancient and approved customs of the kingdom, and especially the liberties and free customs which are contained in the Charters of the common liberties of England and of the forests." The prelates and nobles, and all present, except the king, held lighted candles; and at the conclusion of the sentence the candles were thrown down, with the accustomed denunciation. But the king stood up, and said, "So help me God, all these terms I will faithfully observe, as I am a man, a Christian, a knight, and a crowned and anointed king." The king was suspected when he declined to hold the lighted candle which was presented to him. The pilgrimage was never entered upon; and the king, having obtained a part of the grant, lavishes it at Bourdeaux. More parliaments, more promises, and more grants, till 1258, when a crisis has arrived.

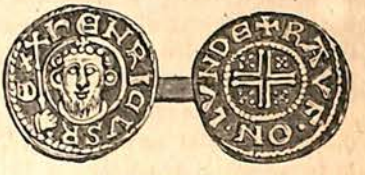
The foreign enterprises of Henry were singularly unpopular. They wanted the great essential of popularity, success. They were begun in rashness and ended in timidity. In his quarrels with Louis IX., had he met with an enemy less just and moderate, he would have lost even Guienne, which he was permitted to keep under fealty to France. But the humiliations which followed such ill-judged policies did not teach him prudence. A new scheme of aggrandisement for his family presented itself in another quarter. The king of Sicily had died in a state of excommunication; and the pope, who pretended to the right of giving away the crown, persuaded Henry to accept the empty title for his son Edmund. In 1257 the king came to his parliament, "bringing his son dressed in the Apulian fashion," and thus harangued: "You see, my faithful subjects, my son Edmund, whom the Lord, of his spontaneous favour, has called to the royal dignity. How evidently worthy he is of the favour of all of you, and how cruel would he be who would refuse him effectual aid." He had pledged himself, he said, under the penalty of losing his kingdom, to the payment of a hundred and forty thousand marks. There was the old condition talked of,—the inviolable observance of the Great Charter; and the king obtained the promise of fifty-two thousand marks. The clergy were even more irritated than the nobles; for Henry avowed that the pope, in furtherance of this project for granting the Sicilian kingdom, had conferred upon him the tithes of all benefices in England, and the first fruits of those which should be vacant. The pope had really advanced a large sum which Henry could not repay; and a Roman agent came before the parliament, and followed up his demand for instant payment by a threat of excommunication and general interdict. A remedy was to be sought in what was an approach to revolution. "Who can deny," says Mr. Hallam, "that measures beyond the ordinary course of the constitution were necessary to control so prodigal and injudicious a sovereign?"

In looking at this remarkable display of the falsehood, cowardice, fickleness, and meanness of the ruler of England, for thirty-six years from the period when he possessed the full regal power, we are naturally surprised how Henry held his position amidst the constant resistance of his nobles, the frequent opposition of the prelates, and the dislike of the burgesses and industrious classes of the whole country. From the signing of Magna Charta, the power of the Great Council was becoming stronger; but it was a very inefficient instrument for resisting a king so unscrupulous and so apparently pliant as this Henry. A bolder man would have provoked a more stringent limitation

of his authority, or would have crushed those who opposed him. The Council met unfrequently. It produced its catalogue of grievances, and redress was promised. Unworthy officers were removed, but new favourites introduced new profligacy. Then supplies were withheld. The king stormed, or wept, and the aid was given. The prelates were in a difficult position. The king was too cowardly to stand up against the papal avarice, and the bishops scarcely dared to defy the extortions of Rome without damage to the authority of the one Church. Matthew Paris had a clear sense of the position of the clergy in 1252: "Even now a manifest schism was imminent, and an almost universal feeling of exasperation was awakened, if not in the body at least in the heart—which was a more serious evil—against the church of Rome, and the small spark of devotion remaining was extinguished." More than all this, the burgess class was rising into importance; and the dominant feudal class had, as far as we can judge, long overlooked this large element of the growing social condition of England. When it became too great to be overlooked, it was regarded with doubt and ill-concealed dislike, but it was not less influential. Some change in the system of government arising out of the changes of society, was impending upon England in the middle of the thirteenth century. It must not be forgotten that the great tenants of the crown, the earls and barons, the natural leaders in any strong expression of resistance, or any sweeping measure of reform, had now wholly become English. They might not be English in language or in feeling. The courtiers might still call the citizens "rustics," which implied that the Saxon blood of the cultivators of the land flowed in their veins. The laws might still be administered in Norman-French. But the tenure of property, which has such an important influence over the whole state of society, was making an undivided nation. In 1244 the king of France declared thus: "As it is impossible that any man living in my kingdom, and having possessions in England, can consistently serve two masters, he must either inseparably attach himself to me, or to the king of England." Those who had possessions in England were therefore called upon to relinquish them, and keep those they had in France; or take their choice, and relinquish those of France, and keep those of England. Henry went further, and ordered that the French in England, especially the Normans, should be dispossessed, without a choice. It was an inevitable policy. It was a fortunate result of events that had passed control. The separation made the barons of England patriots; and under their nationality grew up a people, with traditions of individual freedom that had outlived the feudal organisation, and, blending with it, were in time to produce the rare combination of liberty with order.

We have been speaking, at some length, of the pecuniary exactions of the crown and the pope, and we have necessarily used the money-terms of the chroniclers of the time. Those terms must, to some extent, be unintelligible to the general reader, because they convey no proper appreciation of the value of money. When the historians say that the Jews were compelled to surrender one-third of their effects to the king, we understand the extent of the tyranny. When they say that a tallage of a thousand marks was levied on the Londoners, we are unable distinctly to appreciate the amount of the burthen upon a populous and wealthy city. The pope thrust numerous foreigners into English benefices, and the famous Robert Grosseteste, the

bishop of Lincoln, estimated that their revenues amounted to seventy thousand marks, or three times the clear revenue of the king. We are now dealing with large sums; and with a general notion that there is a vast difference in the value of money now and in the thirteenth century, we rather doubt whether the king had an income sufficient to keep him above the extortions and beggings which the historians impute to him. Dr. Lingard is somewhat of this opinion, and says, that "of all the kings since the conquest, Henry received the least money from the tenants of the crown;" and that, "according to the most accurate calculation, the average amount of his expenditure did not exceed twenty-four thousand marks per annum." A mark was equivalent to two-thirds of a pound, and a pound was as near as can be equivalent to three pounds of our present currency. "The Norman pound was a troy pound-weight of twelve ounces of silver, divided into twenty parts called shillings, and these again divided into twelve parts called either pennies or penny-weights. Thus the money of that period, taking the silver at five shillings per ounce, may be valued at three times the same denomination in the present day." * The mark was therefore equal to two pounds of our present currency. If, upon this simple calculation, we were to turn the twenty-four thousand marks of Henry's yearly revenue into pounds sterling, we should find that it amounted to sixteen thousand pounds of silver, and that those were equal to forty-eight thousand pounds of present money. But, although this was no contemptible income, we must look at this revenue in connection with tables of prices, which, however imperfect, yet afford some materials for comparison with the money-value of modern times. The price of a quartern of wheat was subject to the most awful fluctuations. It was often at a famine price—not the strong phrase of an economist, but a price which, all other grain being equally dear, carried with it a wide-spreading ruin—outrages of humanity, pestilence, and death. But in the reign of Henry III. and Edward I. the average price of wheat was four shillings a quarter. A sheep might be bought for a shilling; an ox for ten shillings. The sheep and the ox were poor starveling animals compared with the produce of modern England. When, therefore, the king imposed an arbitrary tax of a thousand marks upon the city, he demanded two thousand pounds of our present money, or three thousand, three hundred and odd quarters of wheat. In 1244 it was ascertained that the papal see, during several years, had drawn from this country an annual revenue of sixty thousand marks, amounting to forty thousand pounds, or a hundred and twenty thousand pounds of our present money. Mr. Hallam considers "any given sum under Henry III. and Edward I. as equivalent in general command over commodities to about twenty-four or twenty-five times their nominal value at present." If, therefore, the pope's spoil of the industry of the English people were thus estimated, he would, in the wool, or tin, which he abstracted



Penny of Henry III.

* Jacob on the Precious Metals, vol. i., p. 322. This calculation is not quite accurate, but sufficiently so for our present purpose.

from this nation, have received what would be now equivalent to a million sterling. We must cease to consider, therefore, that, in a country with imperfect communication, with no machinery for cheap production, and with an almost entire absence of the conveniences of social life that form the common capital of old communities, the exactions of the pope and the king were trifles. They fell, as all taxes do, upon industry. Whether the revenues which they touched were those of the clergy, the barons, or the burgesses, they withdrew the capital which supported labour. Dr. Lingard attributes the general belief of Henry's rapacity "to the remonstrances of factious barons, or the complaints of discontented historians." It would be more reasonable to attribute the remonstrances and complaints to the circumstance that the industry of the great body of the people began to have some due appreciation; and that "factious barons" began to see that their own condition was improved in proportion as the cultivators and the artisans were prosperous; and that security was as necessary for the burgess in his narrow street, as for the lord in his inaccessible castle. "Discontented historians" were those of the monasteries, who reflected the spirit of their superiors. There can be no question that the bishops and abbots of this period, having their worldly prosperity intimately blended with that of the whole community, stoutly resisted the encroachments not only of their king, but of their spiritual head. The mitred abbots, especially, were a most powerful body, having large possessions which, for the most part, they administered wisely and humanely. They had all the interests of great landed proprietors to maintain, and those interests were best upheld when they had a happy and thriving tenantry around them. The learning of the cloister was not tainted with the miserable political superstition of later times of the Church, when the king was set up as the image of God upon earth, above all human law, and beyond the reach of punishment for misdoing. The slavish doctrine of non-resistance was not yet preached in parliaments and synods. The churchmen of the thirteenth century were, amidst all the luxurious corruptions which have been imputed to them, a sturdy race, who knew the value of civil freedom, and battled for it as bravely as the men of the sword.

An English Mitred Abbot.

In the spring of 1258 England was severely visited by a common calamity of the middle ages—a scarcity of corn so great as to produce a famine. The harvest of 1257 had been unusually late, in consequence of heavy rains. The crops on the banks of the Severn, and other great rivers, were swept away by floods. The gradual rise of price, which is the surest preventive of the last evil of scarcity, was interfered with by the usual mistaken policy of compelling the holders of corn to bring their crops to market. Fifteen thousand people had died in London, when a herald went forth and proclaimed that those who wanted bread should apply to certain nobles, who would bestow alms upon them. Ships arrived from Germany, bringing as much corn as was equal to the produce of three English counties; and a proclamation was issued, forbidding any merchant to buy corn for storing-up. We know that all such interference is mistaken benevolence; but it is not easy to see how a government could then act otherwise in such an emergency. A portion of the kingdom had been laid waste by fire and sword. There had been an insurrection of the Welsh in 1257, and the border lands had been reduced to an uninhabited desert. With these evils around them, the parliament met at Westminster on the 2nd of May. In the great hall was a large body of barons assembled, each in complete armour. As the king entered, there was a clatter of swords; and Henry, looking round in alarm, said, "Am I a prisoner?" "No, sir," said Roger Bigod, "but your foreign favourites and your prodigality have brought misery upon the realm; wherefore we demand that the powers of government be delegated to a committee of bishops and barons, who may correct abuses, and enact good laws." In that assembly was the most remarkable man of those times, Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. He was the son of the Count de Montfort, the persecutor of the Albigenses; and he became earl of Leicester in right of his mother. In 1238 he had married Eleanor, a sister of king Henry. The union was opposed, upon the ground that he was a foreign subject; but from that time he became an Englishman in all his actions. More than any man of his times he appears to have seen of what material the great mixed commonalty of England was composed. He soon became endeared to the people; and was consequently obnoxious to the court, surrounded as it was by those who regarded the English merely as a rabble to be plundered and despised. The favourites of Henry procured his banishment from the king's presence. He was afterwards entrusted with the government of Guienne; and, ruling there firmly, was complained of by those whose interests were mixed up with a lax administration, and was removed from his government. He withdrew for a time to France. In the great meeting in Westminster Hall, on the 2nd of May, 1258, Simon de Montfort stood the most dreaded man of the formidable league. The king's tyrannical half-brother, William de Valence, and the earl of Leicester, were at bitter enmity. But no violence of Henry's adherents could prevent the completion of the agreement which placed the power of the state in other hands. A commission of twenty-four was decided on, one half of which had been selected from the king's council, and the other half was to be appointed by the barons at a parliament to be held at Oxford. On these conditions it was agreed that the king's debts should be paid. On the 11th of June, this famous parliament met at Oxford. It has been called, "The mad parliament." It would have been well for England if all

parliaments had been equally sane. It has been the fashion to consider the "Provisions of Oxford," as they were called, as the rash innovations of an ambitious oligarchy. The principle of the securities then required from the crown was adopted from the Great Charter; and the appointment of a supreme council of state was one of the conditions imposed upon John, with the more stringent demand that the twenty-five barons, who were then to control the executive, should be selected without the concurrence of the king. That the parliament of Oxford so managed the elections to the council as to obtain a majority holding popular opinions is not unlikely, and it can scarcely be imputed to them as a fault. The earl of Leicester was nominated as head of the council. It was enacted that four knights should be chosen by the votes of the freeholders in each county, who should submit all breaches of law and justice to a parliament, to be called together regularly thrice in each year; that the sheriffs of the counties should be chosen by the freeholders; and that the great officers of state should be re-appointed. Prince Edward reluctantly took the oaths to observe the provisions to which his father had sworn. But the king's half-brothers, though two of them had been nominated to the council, openly expressed their dissatisfaction; and De Montfort, threatening them with the loss of their lands, and even their lives, they fled to France, with a host of followers who were hated by the English. The council of state filled up the vacancies in their own body without reference to the king's right of nomination. It soon became clear that this was no settlement of the great question between the crown and the popular leaders.

In July, the king was at Westminster, and being in his pleasure barge on the Thames, a thunder-storm came on, at which he was alarmed, and landed in the garden of the bishop of Durham. De Montfort was in the palace of the bishop, and went forward to greet the king. "What do you fear, sir?" said the earl; "the storm has passed over." The king replied, "I fear thunder and lightning beyond measure; but, by God's head, I fear you more than all the thunder and lightning in the world." At the beginning of 1259, the king's brother Richard, who was now king of the Romans, came to England to look after his pecuniary interests. He was not allowed to set foot in the country till he had sworn to the Provisions of Oxford. He took the oaths, and then commenced a vigorous opposition to the committee of government. In a short time, this controlling power of the state was split into two factions—that of the earl of Leicester and that of the earl of Gloucester. De Montfort withdrew to France. The movements of Prince Edward are involved in considerable obscurity, during the next year or two; and a suspicion went forth that he had a design of seizing the crown. The king, having obtained a dispensation from the pope to violate the Provisions of Oxford, told the committee of council, in 1261, that he should rule without them. He obtained possession of the Tower of London, and commanded the citizens to renew their fealty to him. Edward was in France, but he hurried home; and though his father had also procured for him a dispensation, he refused to violate the oath which he had taken at Oxford. There is a show of civil war for a year, which the king carries on with mercenary troops; but in 1262 he again consents to observe this solemn pledge. It would be tedious to follow through the monotonous distractions and unintelligible intrigues of this period; which are very obscurely shadowed out in public documents

and contemporary chronicles; and which modern historians have recorded according to their own predilections. As Simon de Montfort was undoubtedly the popular leader—adored by the commons and respected by the clergy,—Hume, as the consistent supporter of kings and hater of priests, denounces him as the champion of a tyrannous aristocracy,—a subverter of the monarchy,—a bold and artful conspirator,—a licenser of pillage,—a hypocritical pretender to sanctity,—a man of violence, ingratitude, tyranny, rapacity, and treachery. The historian uses these bitter words against the earl of Leicester in the utter absence of any established charge against his public conduct, or any probable imputation that he was not sincerely desirous of promoting the welfare of the English people. Like all statesmen of pre-eminent ability, Leicester was assailed by great and petty rivals; and he had as much difficulty in struggling with his own adherents as in carrying on a national contest against a faithless king and a rapacious court. But in every evidence of the opinion of his contemporaries,—in the annals of the monk and the ballad of the minstrel—there is one leader who "loves right and hates wrong:" who was "the Mattathias of the suffering people," (the gift of the Lord); who was, in the words of a hymn long sung in his honour, "Protector gentis Angliæ." In all the emanations of contemporary opinion,—in the Latin poem of the cloistered scholar, and the English song of the travelling harper—"all with one accord agree in their praise and support of the great Simon de Montfort." *

In 1263 Leicester returned to England. His rival, Gloucester, was dead, and the son of Gloucester gathered his retainers and put himself under the guidance of De Montfort. In 1264, after various turns of fortune, the differences between the king of England and his barons in arms were referred to Louis of France, by mutual consent. He decided that the Great Charter should be observed, but he set aside the Provisions of Oxford. The observance of the Great Charter had been so often sworn to, and so constantly violated, that the decree of Louis appeared to give no greater warranty than what previously existed for the liberties of the kingdom; and the barons rejected the decree as unfairly obtained by the influence of Henry's sister, the wife of Louis. The civil war was renewed. When licence takes the place of law there is little hope for the rich who are not able to protect themselves. The Jews of London were massacred and plundered by both parties. The people of London were all in arms. The royalists had captured Northampton, under the command of the king. Prince Edward had compelled the submission of Tutbury. The military talents and the force of character of Edward now presented themselves in conspicuous rivalry with the energies and popularity of De Montfort. The great trial of strength was come. On the 13th of May, 1264, the two armies of the king and the barons met on the downs of Lewes.

Henry had marched from the neighbourhood of London upon Rochester. Having taken the castle of Tunbridge, he proceeded to Winchelsea, and, finally reaching Lewes, was lodged in the priory. Prince Edward occupied the castle. The position was a commanding one. The army of the barons had marched direct from London, and halted on the night of the 12th at the

* Preface to "Political Songs," by Thomas Wright.

village of Fletching, ten miles from Lewes. The barons had sent a message to the king, assuring him that they desired to preserve the health and safety of his person, and to punish only the enemies of his kingdom; and Henry returned an indignant answer, in which his brother Richard and Prince Edward concurred, defying each and all of them as public enemies. These were feudal forms of mutual defiance; and Edward and Richard accompanied the king's letter with a challenge to Simon de Montfort and Gilbert de Clare (the earl of Gloucester) to meet them in mortal single combat. Before sunrise of the morning of the 13th the army of the barons was on its march; and took up a position on a hill about two miles from Lewes. De Montfort's soldiers wore white crosses on their breasts and backs, such as the army of God and the Church wore before the day of Runnymede. The king marched out to meet the advancing force. His army was in three divisions; that of the barons was in four. Edward, who commanded a division, made a fierce onslaught with his cavalry on that division of the adverse forces in which were the great body of the Londoners. He put them to the rout; and in the fury of his pursuit followed them over that undulating ground for four miles. When he returned, satiated with the blood of three thousand of these rebellious citizens, whom he regarded as the personal enemies of his family, he found that the field was lost. His impetuosity had given an advantage to the promptitude of De Montfort, who threw all his force on the weakened divisions of king Henry and the king of the Romans, and made both these leaders his prisoners. In that hollow which the modern railway traverses was the great scene of slaughter. One of the oldest known songs in the English language recites some circumstances of this battle:—

"The kyng of Alemaigne gederede ys host,
Makede him a castel of a mulne post."

He made his castle of a windmill. The next day a treaty was entered into, by which it was agreed that Prince Edward, and Henry, the son of the king of the Romans, should remain as hostages for their fathers; and that the whole matters in dispute should be referred to arbitration. Edward was sent to Dover Castle; and the old song says,

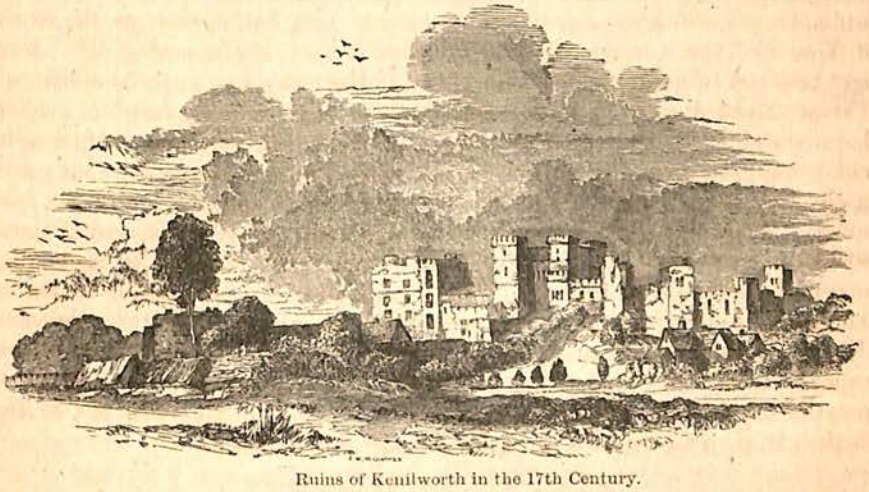
"Be the luef, be the loht, sire Edward,
Thou shalt ride sporeless o thy lyard,
Al the ryhte way to Dovere ward." *

Though the king was subject to no confinement in stone walls, as his brother Richard was, he was really a prisoner in the hands of the victors. No arbitration was attempted, for the referees refused the office. It was a triumph which placed the administration of the realm in the hands of De Montfort and De Clare. The queen had left England before the battle of Lewes, and had collected a great force of mercenary troops to invade the country. De Montfort, relying upon the attachment of the people, called out the whole militia of the nation, from every township and every city and borough. The harvest was approaching, but no excuse was admitted; and in a short time a great army encamped on Barham Downs. The pope had excommunicated De Montfort and his adherents; but the people were

* "Be thee willing, or be thee loth, Sir Edward, Thou shalt ride spurless on thy hack," &c. The song is given in Mr. Wright's "Political Songs," and also in Percy's "Reliques."

indifferent to the once terrible denunciation; and the name of the earl of Leicester went through the land as "Sir Simon the Righteous." All the acts of his government were done in the name of the king, who was treated with every outward respect. There were no deaths or forfeitures for political offences. De Montfort gathered the mariners of the Cinque Ports, and went to sea to meet the fleet of the queen, whose army was collected at Damme. The invasion was never attempted.

The earl of Leicester kept his Christmas at Kenilworth, his maternal inheritance. In the king's name he issued writs for the meeting of a par-



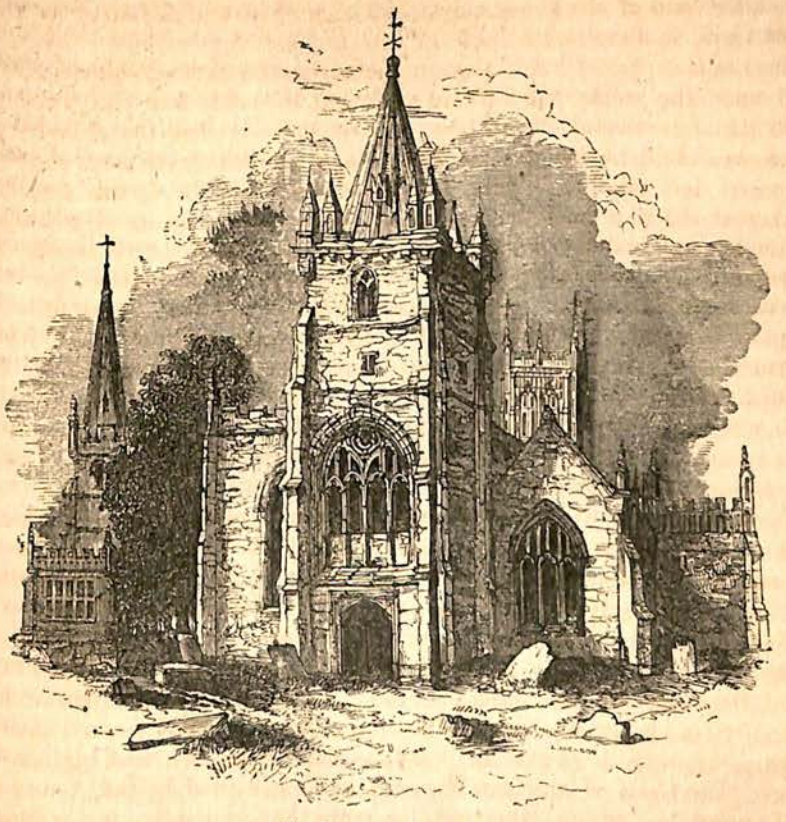
Ruins of Kenilworth in the 17th Century.

liament. There may have been some precedents for calling others to the great council than the tenants-in-chief of the crown and the prelates and abbots. But the writs of Simon de Montfort were the first in which we distinctly recognise the Parliament of England. They were directed to the sheriffs, commanding them to elect and return two knights for each county, two citizens for each city, and two burgesses for each borough. Only eleven prelates and twenty-three peers were summoned; but a large number of the dignified clergy came to this national council. Hume considers that Leicester summoned a parliament "on a more democratic basis than any which had been ever summoned since the foundation of the monarchy," merely to advance his own popularity. Lingard affirms that the popular representatives were chosen through Leicester's influence, to be "the obsequious ministers of his will." We believe that De Montfort felt that a social condition had arisen which rendered it imperative that the government should be put upon a broader basis than the fiat of a king, only controlled by a council of peers and prelates, whom he defied whenever it suited his will. That this able man saw, with any clear foresight, the possible freedom and security to be attained in a monarchy resting upon the principle of representation, may be reasonably doubted; but it would be unjust not to assign to Simon de Montfort the glory of having seen that, in a time of great national exigency, safety and peace could only be attained in a general council of freemen, instead of a limited assembly of the high-born and dignified;—"that he saw the part of

society which was growing in strength, and with which a provident government ought to seek an alliance." *

The Parliament of 1265, which assembled on the 28th of January, determined upon the release of Edward from confinement, but that he should remain "in free custody" at Hereford. It decreed that the charters and ordinances should be inviolably observed, and prescribed some strong securities which left the king little exercise of his free-will. It was not likely that they would be a permanent restraint upon a young prince of the vigour of Edward. Dissensions grew up between the earls of Leicester and Gloucester. The natural and acquired superiority of De Montfort provoked jealousy. His elevation was dangerous for himself. Robert Grosseteste, the bishop of Lincoln, while exhorting him to persevere in the cause of justice and truth, predicted his fall. So writes Matthew Paris. In the May of 1265, Prince Edward escaped from his "free custody," by proposing a trial of horses, and having obtained the fleetest, outrode his pursuers. There were nobles speedily in arms for the royalist cause, and the king's banner was raised under the earl of Gloucester at Ludlow. The prince received the command; but the nobles who joined him had the wisdom to make him swear that he would respect the Charters. De Montfort, having the king in his possession, marched upon Worcester. Edward obtained at Kenilworth an advantage over Simon, the son of the great earl, and went forward to give battle to De Montfort, who had taken up a position at Evesham. He waited there the expected arrival of his son's troops from Kenilworth; but Edward had taken some of the leaders of that force prisoners, and the young De Montfort kept in the safety of his father's castle. The position of Leicester was a dangerous one, which he would have avoided if he had not felt assured that his son was at hand. The town of Evesham is, as it were, encircled by the Avon; and from Twyford to Evesham, the road, for more than two miles, is a tongue of land, with the river at no considerable distance on either hand. De Montfort was shut up in that bounded field of action, with a narrow stone bridge the only passage to the safer plains. On the morning of the 4th of August, the barber of the earl, says "The Chronicle of Evesham," went up to the highest tower of the abbey-church; and he came down in gladness to tell that he saw the banner of De Montfort on the distant road, in advance of a mighty host. And again he went up; and pale and trembling he descended, for the banners of Prince Edward, and Gloucester, and Mortimer were now visible. Then said the earl of Leicester, "God have our souls all, our days are all done." De Montfort scorned to fly. He marched forward on the road by which his enemy was advancing. Henry, the king, was in the midst of his host. The battle was gained. In a little valley called Battlewell the carnage was thickest. The king, turned loose upon a war-horse, saved himself from his own friends by crying, "I am Henry of Winchester." There was no escape from the slaughter of Prince Edward's horsemen, but over that narrow Evesham bridge. De Montfort and his son Henry fell. There was no quarter given; and the mutilation of the remains of the great earl disgraced the conquerors.

* Mackintosh: "History of England," vol. i., p. 246.



The Churches, Evesham.

CHAPTER XXV.

The award of Kenilworth—The Crusade of Prince Edward—Attempt to assassinate Edward—Death of Henry III.—Coronation of Edward I.—Llewellyn, Prince of Wales—Submission of Llewellyn—Various Statutes passed of public utility—Persecution and banishment of the Jews—Insurrection of the Welsh—Llewellyn slain—His brother executed—Subjection of Wales—Statutes for Wales.

THE 4th of August, 1265, was a day of terror throughout many parts of England. Robert of Gloucester, in his versified chronicle, declares that he was a witness to the general storm which added to the horrors of the great battle of that day. Whilst the blood of the slain was crimsoning the waters of the Avon, the air suddenly grew dark, so that the monks of the magnificent abbey of Evesham, who went on with their daily services whilst the din of battle was braying around them, could no longer sing the alternate verses of their psalms.* Then, according to the custom of the time, whilst the thunder

* See "Chronicon Willelmi de Rishanger," Camden Society, p. 47.

pealed, the bells of the abbey church rang out their imploring notes; and the fierce warriors, stumbling amidst the dead and dying, suspended their horrible carnage in that dismal hour, though their leaders had said no quarter should be given. The people believed that Heaven thus asserted its displeasure at the death and discomfiture of their champion. His memory did not soon fade away. It was thought necessary that a positive law should prohibit "any man from holding Simon, earl of Leicester, for a saint or just one;" and "that the vain and foolish miracles related of him by certain persons shall not pass any man's lips." Thus saith "the award made between the king and his commons at Kenilworth." In the parliament held at Kenilworth, in November, 1266,* it was an especial object to restore the peace of the kingdom by assigning to the king his legitimate power, under the condition that he should adhere to his oath to preserve and keep the liberties of the church, and the Charters; and that, with certain exceptions, all those who, during "the present troubles of the realm," had committed offences against the king or his crown, should be wholly pardoned, if they should come in to his peace. This disposition to enforce an almost general amnesty is an indication of the extent to which the opposition to the royal authority had gone. That opposition was not at an end when Simon de Montfort fell at Evesham. A band of his adherents defended the castle of Kenilworth against the royalist forces; and its garrison only surrendered under the pressure of famine, in November, 1266. Simon, the eldest son of the great earl, long defied the king's armies in the Isle of Ely and the Isle of Axholm; the Cinque Ports, which were strongly attached to the interests of De Montfort, resisted Prince Edward, who took Dover and Winchelsea after much bloodshed. Eleanora, the widow of the earl of Leicester, "desolate and confounded at the death of her husband, would not stay longer in England, but went to transmarine parts; and though she was the sister of the king of England, yet the king accounted her as a stranger on account of the hatred he had borne her husband." Thus writes a contemporary chronicler.† Simon and Guy, two sons of this unfortunate house, wandering on the continent, took a fearful revenge for the fate of their father, by murdering Henry, son of the king of Germany, and nephew to Henry III., in 1271. The De Montforts were all proscribed by the English government. They were excepted from the pardons and commutations of "The award of Kenilworth." The capricious earl of Gloucester, having quarrelled with the king, again took up arms, and seized London in 1267, the citizens making common cause with him. But he soon submitted, and the land was at peace. Freebooters, however, were to be found in many of the wooded districts; and to this period may be assigned the belief, to which we have alluded,‡ that Robin Hood and his lawless companions in the Forest of Sherwood were the disinherited adherents of the earl of Leicester. One incident, recorded in chronicle, may seem to warrant some such opinion. Matthew of Westminster relates that prince Edward, travelling through the wooded pass of Alton—a place long frequented by outlaws who there awaited merchants passing to or from Winchester—encountered a certain knight, by name Adam Gordon, whose

* Statutes of the Realm, vol. i. p. 12. 1820.

† Liber de Gestis Britonum, Cotton MS. Quoted in Mrs. Green's learned and accurate "Lives of the Princesses of England," vol. ii. p. 151.

‡ See p. 323.

property had been confiscated; and engaging in single combat with him, overthrew him, but spared his life for his boldness, though he hung all his followers on the trees of the wood.

In 1269, the victor of Evesham, with many barons and knights, took the cross at Northampton, before setting out upon an expedition to the Holy Land. We probably do some injustice to the crusading princes, when we seek for other motives to impel them to these dangerous and expensive expeditions than their religious enthusiasm. But it certainly does seem extraordinary that a prince, who was evidently as politic as he was adventurous, should have left a distracted kingdom, under an aged and weak king, even at the bidding of an absorbing zeal acting upon a bold and ardent temperament. Hume ascribes the resolve of Edward to his avidity for glory, and his deference to the prejudices of the age. Lingard suggests that there was as much of policy as devotion in his conduct; and that the crusade would open a field for the exertions of turbulent spirits who might be dangerous at home. The late Mr. Hudson Turner, whose great antiquarian knowledge was made subservient to its proper use as illustrative of history, found in an original document the names of members of the most powerful families in England, who had agreed to accompany the prince; and he also discovered that he engaged their assistance by pecuniary advances. That list includes "some of the most considerable barons and knights who had survived the slaughter of the civil war; and some who, from their late complicity with the earl of Leicester, may be considered to have been still suspected persons, whom it was desirable to restrain from further plots against the crown." * The ambitious earl of Gloucester was amongst this number. Henry, in 1268, obtained a grant from the people of the tenth of the church revenues for three years, for the purposes of this crusade, and a general subsidy of a twentieth of the goods of the laity was also raised. This subsidy yielded £31,488, exclusive of the expense of collection. The Rolls of Parliament show what such a subsidy meant. It was a property-tax upon all the moveable possessions of the people, from the valuable stock of the wealthy tanner, down to the commonest utensil of the poor housewife, and the simplest tools of the working carpenter.† This subsidy of 1268 was certainly equal to half a million pounds of our present money; and, reckoning upon the same principle, the goods and chattels of the kingdom, being twenty times the amount of the assessment, would reach the sum of ten million pounds. Small as this accumulation is, as compared with the property of modern times, we still see that in spite of the devastation occasioned by the wars and misgovernment of centuries, the people were gathering around them many of the conveniences that distinguish a civilised from a barbarous condition of society. Joinville, in his interesting Memoirs of Louis IX. of France, has a remark upon his just and benevolent administration, which the English kings might have advantageously remembered in after times: "Population increased so much throughout the realm, from the justness and uprightness which reigned, that the estates, rents, and revenues of the kingdom were in one year nearly doubled."

* "Unpublished Notices of the Times of Edward I." by T. Hudson Turner, in "Archæologica Journal," No. 29, p. 46.

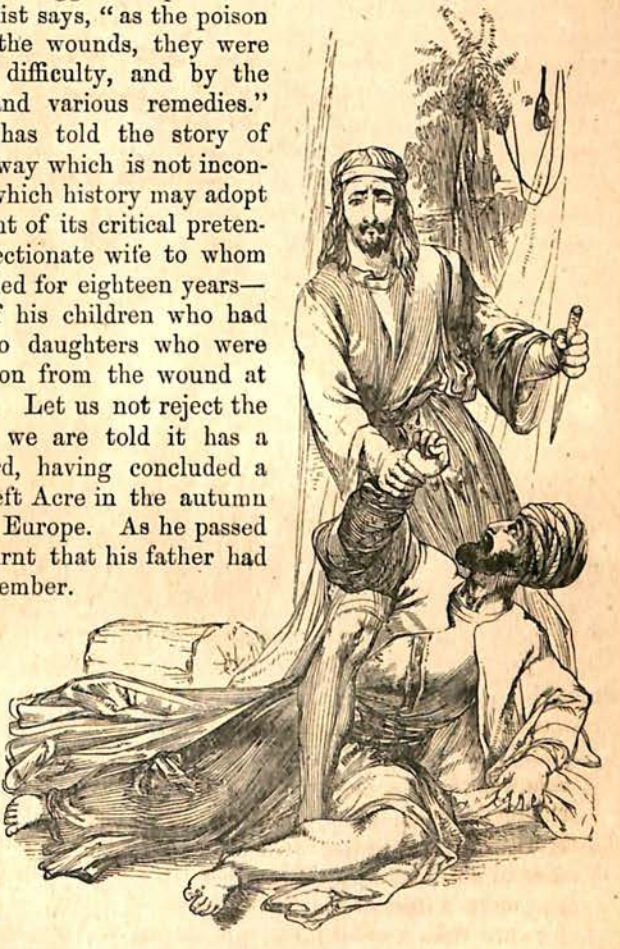
† Rot. Parl. i. 228, quoted in "Eden's History of the Poor," vol. i. p. 19.

The taxation of the churchmen and laity of England was insufficient for the expenses of the crusade. Edward borrowed a large sum of the king of France, secured upon the revenues of Bourdeaux. Louis IX. himself had set out on the expedition in 1270; and Edward, with his train of barons and their hundred and four knights, and accompanied by his faithful wife, Eleanor of Castile, set sail for the Holy Land. It was probably owing to his political foresight that the Londoners were appeased, previously to his departure, by a

Queen Eleanor.—From her Tomb in Westminster Abbey.

renewal of their charters. King Louis was diverted from the main object of the expedition, by turning his arms against the bey of Tunis, who had refused tribute to the brother of Louis, the king of Sicily. The French king died of a dysentery on this unhealthy coast. The career of prince Edward was therefore suspended. He wintered in Sicily. In the spring of 1271 he set forward with a small force, and landed at Acre, the only place left of the once powerful kingdom of the crusaders. Acre was surrounded by the troops of the sultan of Babylon; but the reputation of the English courage had survived in the east, and the sultan retired. Edward then gained some battles, and took Nazareth by storm. But he soon returned to Acre, where his wife gave birth to a daughter, Joanna. Here occurred one of those episodes of history, which relieve its monotonous details of battle and intrigue. The emir of Jaffa was in correspondence with the English prince, and had gained his confidence by professing his willingness to embrace Christianity. The messenger of the emir had arrived with a letter, and was

admitted to Edward's chamber. The prince was dressed in a loose robe; and the Saracen, finding a favourable occasion for a perfidious act, struck him in the arm twice with a dagger. Edward, one of the most powerful of an athletic race, seized the assassin, and dispatched him with his own weapon. Matthew Paris adds to this account, "Some say that Edward, on finding himself suddenly wounded, having nothing at hand to defend himself with, seized the tripod which supported his table, and brained the ruffian." The dagger was poisoned. The contemporary annalist says, "as the poison entered and spread in the wounds, they were only cured with great difficulty, and by the application of many and various remedies." Some later chronicler has told the story of Edward's recovery in a way which is not inconsistent with truth, and which history may adopt without any impeachment of its critical pretensions. Eleanor, the affectionate wife to whom Edward had been married for eighteen years—the mother of many of his children who had died young, and of two daughters who were living—sucked the poison from the wound at the risk of her own life. Let us not reject the touching story because we are told it has a Spanish origin. Edward, having concluded a truce with the sultan, left Acre in the autumn of 1272, and set sail for Europe. As he passed through Calabria he learnt that his father had died on the 16th of November.



Henry III. was buried at Westminster on the 20th of November, 1272. On the same day, "when the king had been buried, as is the custom of kings to be buried, Gilbert, earl of Warrenne, and all the clergy and laity, proceeded without delay to the great altar of the church aforesaid, and there swore fealty to Edward, the eldest son of the late king, though they were wholly ignorant whether he was alive, for he was in distant countries beyond the sea, warring against the adversaries of Christ And after this the nobles of the kingdom assembled in like manner at the New Temple of London. And having had a new seal made, they appointed faithful ministers and guardians to protect faithfully the treasure of the king and the peace of the kingdom." * The hereditary principle, in this case,

* Matthew of Westminster.

where there could be no possible dispute as to the succession, seems to have commanded the fealty sworn at the high altar of Westminster; but, no doubt, the ancient forms of election were gone through. On the death of Edward I., his eldest son Edward II. succeeded, as Walsingham records, "not only by hereditary right, but by the unanimous assent of the nobles and great men."

Edward the Crusader was in no great haste to enter upon the duties of a king of England. He passes in triumph through Italy; and in Burgundy is

Reverse of Great Seal of Edward I.

met by a magnificent deputation of his English clergy and barons. He proceeds to Paris, where he does homage to king Philip "for the lands which he held, by right, of the crown of France." At this period Edward was challenged to a tournament by the count of Chalons. The pope, by letter, told him that no king was bound to answer such a challenge. But the knightly spirit prevailed over the royal prudence; and Edward entered the lists with a thousand retainers, both horsemen and spearmen. In the *mêlée*, many were killed; and the English appear to have behaved with most despicable ferocity. Edward himself, when he had unhorsed the athletic count his challenger, stood over his suppliant enemy, and belaboured him with a brutality of which an English costermonger would now be ashamed. Such was chivalry—that compound of cruelty and generosity, of physical daring and moral cowardice, of sensitive honour and broken faith. "The English," says Matthew of Westminster, "being roused by the stimulus of indignation, slew many of the French, and as they were persons of low degree, very little notice was taken of their deaths."

On the 3rd of August, 1274, king Edward landed at Dover, and on the 19th of August he and his queen were crowned at Westminster. The

coronation feast presents a curious illustration of the rude hospitality of that age. The most minute particulars have been preserved by a contemporary writer, who is supposed to have been a town-clerk of London;* and his account is corroborated by official documents. There were two halls at Westminster, as there were at Windsor. The greater hall was that of Rufus, in which, however altered, George IV. kept his coronation feast. The town-clerk tells us that many new halls were built up, in which tables were fixed in the ground, at which all who came, princes, nobles, the rich and the poor, were feasted for fifteen days. Innumerable kitchens were built beside the halls, and numberless leaden cauldrons were placed outside the kitchens, for additional cooking. Oxen, sheep, and pigs were consumed in numbers exceeding those of a crowded market-day in recent Smithfield; and Leadenhall market at Christmas could not vie with this royal poultry-show. The Pipe Rolls record that three hundred barrels of wine were purchased for this occasion.† A vast temporary stable was built in St. Margaret's churchyard. When great earls and magnificent prelates travelled with a gorgeous retinue of horsemen, this was not the least necessary provision for abundance of guests.

The hospitalities of his coronation were scarcely ended when Edward repaired to Chester. The state of Wales presented a tempting occasion for the exercise of his politic ambition. The prince of Wales, Llewellyn, had been in arms against Henry III. in the war of the barons, but had promised fealty to the king before Edward went on his crusade. But there was always doubt in the mind of the Welsh prince of the intentions of Edward towards him. He had suffered much hardship at the hands of Henry III. during his youthful captivity. He was deeply attached to the family of De Montfort; and in the days of their prosperity, when Kenilworth was the seat of the Countess of Leicester's abundant hospitality, he had pledged his hand to Eleanora, her daughter. When he was summoned as a vassal of the English crown to the coronation of Edward, he refused to attend without a safe conduct. When Edward repaired to Chester, Llewellyn was again summoned, and refused to meet the king. He was further summoned to attend a parliament at Westminster in 1275, and again he declined to appear. Before the death of the widow of the earl of Leicester, in 1275, the young Eleanora was married by proxy to the Welsh prince, who

Coronation of Edward I.

* See "Liber de Antiquis Legibus," published by the Camden Society.

† See the valuable work of Mr. Hudson Turner on "Domestic Architecture in England," p. 65.

kept that faith to the poor and exiled orphan which he had vowed in the days of her prosperity. She sailed with her brother Almeric, in 1276, to join her affianced husband in Wales. The vessel which bore her from the continent was intercepted off the Scilly islands; and Eleanora and her brother became the captives of their cousin Edward. The brother and sister were placed in separate custody. Llewellyn indignantly demanded the release of his bride; and once again refused to attend a parliament. He offered a ransom for Eleanora and her brother, but the king was inexorable. The crafty politician felt that he could trample upon the independence of Wales, through his ungenerous outrage upon the affections of its prince. When Llewellyn refused to come to the parliament of 1276, his lands were declared to be forfeited; and in 1277, Edward led an army into Wales. The mountain chiefs were unable to make head against this invasion; and David, the brother of Llewellyn, was seduced by Edward to forget the cause of his country in revenge for some personal injury in the matter of his patrimony. Llewellyn, beset by foreign foes and domestic treachery, submitted to the hard terms which the king of England imposed upon him. He retained only the complete sovereignty of the district of Snowdon and the isle of Anglesey, though the title of prince of Wales remained to him. Upon the promise of a large tribute, which could never be paid, Eleanora was given up to Llewellyn, and they were married at Worcester, in 1278, in the presence of Edward and his court. Almeric de Montfort was kept in confinement four years longer. The terms of peace with Wales had been previously arranged at Westminster. Carte, the historian, has a curious anecdote connected with this temporary submission of the Welsh prince. "The barons of Snowdon, with other noblemen of the most considerable families in Wales, had attended Llewellyn to London, when he came thither at Christmas, A.D. 1277, to do homage to king Edward; and bringing, according to their usual custom, large retinues with them, were quartered in Islington and the neighbouring villages. These places did not afford milk enough for such numerous trains; they liked neither wine nor the ale of London, and, though plentifully entertained, were much displeased at a new manner of living which did not suit their taste, nor perhaps their constitutions. They were still more offended at the crowds of people that flocked about them when they stirred abroad, staring at them as if they had been monsters, and laughing at their uncouth garb and appearance. They were so enraged on this occasion, that they engaged privately in an association to rebel on the first opportunity, and resolved to die in their own country rather than ever come again to London, as subjects, to be held in such derision; and when they returned home, they communicated their resentments to their compatriots, who made it the common cause of their country."

Five years elapsed before the discontents of the Welsh broke out into organised resistance to the English authority. England had been peacefully settled since the accession of Edward; and during that period several statutes of great importance had reduced the laws of the country to a more accurate shape, and introduced many new provisions for the correction of abuses, and the due administration of justice. The statute of 1275, called the first statute of Westminster, is a very elaborate code of fifty-one chapters. These, as the preamble recites, were "The acts of King Edward, made at his first parliament

general, and by his council, and by the assent of archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, and the commonalty of the realm being thither summoned." Without entering upon such provisions of this statute as are of a technical nature, we may mention a few matters which are illustrative of the condition of society. Religious houses were oppressed by barons and great men demanding hospitality, at a time when there were no public hostelries. The statute provides that none should so lodge and feed unless invited, but "that the grace of hospitality should not be withdrawn from such as need." On the subject of wrecks of the sea, it was enacted that where a man, a dog, or a cat escape quick out of the ship, that such ship, nor barge, nor any thing within them, should be adjudged wreck. The statute asserted freedom of election, against the interference of any man by arms or menace; and this was important when sheriffs, coroners, and conservators of the peace were chosen by the freeholders; and representation in parliament, by election of the people, was becoming an institution of the country. It upheld the principle that no king's officer should take any reward to do his office; such enactment being one of the many proofs of the inefficiency of law to restrain corruption, for within fourteen years there were only two judges, out of fifteen, who were not found guilty of the grossest extortions. It provided that no serjeant or pleader should use deceit to beguile the court, under pain of imprisonment—a law which has fallen into disuse, from its total inapplicability to modern advocacy. It threatened with punishment the devisors of slanderous news, as we have already noticed,—the first libel law. It rendered juries giving false verdicts liable to "attaint," under which suspicion the king granted a new trial; and it said that "certain people of this realm doubt very little to make a false oath." Lastly, the statute provided that particular assizes should be held during the great seasons of religious festival; "forasmuch as it is a great charity to do right unto all men at all times." We may mention one or two other statutes of this period before we resume the course of our narrative. The statute for the Office of the Coroner provides that he should go to the places where any be slain, or suddenly dead, or wounded, or where houses are broken, or where treasure is said to be found, and there make inquiry upon the oath of four of the next towns, or five or six. The Statute of Merchants (1283) recites that "merchants which heretofore have lent their goods to divers persons be greatly impoverished, because there is no speedy law provided for them to have recovery of their debts at the day of payment assigned." Lord Chief Justice Campbell, speaking of this law, (called the Statute of Acton Burnel) says, that "the grievance which is peculiar to England, of being obliged to bring an action and have a debt established by the judgment of a court of law before enforcing payment of it, when there is not the slightest doubt of the validity of the instrument by which it is constituted, has always been a reproach to the administration of justice in this country." * The Statute of Acton Burnel provided that where a debt had been acknowledged before a proper officer, and a day of payment fixed, execution might follow on default of payment. It is only within the last year that the principle has been applied to bills of exchange. The Statute of Winchester (1285) recites that robberies,

* "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," vol. i. p. 167.

murders, and burning of houses, "be more often used than they have been heretofore," and therefore makes the hundred answerable for robberies. But it attempts something for prevention. In great towns, being walled, the gates are to be closed from sun-setting to sun-rising, and there shall be watch all night. Highways leading from one market town to another are to be enlarged, so that, within two hundred feet of each side of the road, there should be no bushes, woods, or dykes, with the exception of great trees; and if the lord would not abate the dyke, underwood, or bushes, he is to be answerable for any felony committed. It is also provided that "every man have in his house harness, for to keep the peace after the antient assize:" and the nature of the arms to be kept,—whether hauberk, sword, knife, or bow and arrows,—is regulated according to the property, in land or goods, of the owner of the house. In the statutes for the city of London (also 1285) "it is enjoined that none be hardy to be found going or wandering about the streets of the city, after curfew bell tolled at St. Martin's-le-Grand, with sword, or buckler, or other arms for doing mischief," and that "none do keep a tavern open for wine or ale after the tolling of the aforesaid curfew." In a future period of this reign we shall have to recur to other of these legislative illustrations of our social history.*

In 1279, king Edward visited king Philip of France at Amiens. At this meeting some of the causes of dispute between the crowns were wisely removed, by Edward receiving formal possession of Gascony, and as formally resigning Normandy. About this time the first statute of Mortmain was passed. In Magna Charta there was a provision against a person giving his land to a religious house, so as to take it back, and hold it of the house. The statute (7 Edward I.) prescribed that all lands given in mortmain—that is, into the "dead hand" of the church—without the king's special licence, were to be forfeited. Matthew of Westminster notices this enactment in a quaint fashion: "The king, and prelates, and nobles of England agreed together, and enacted, that the members of the religious orders should not be enriched by any increase of landed estates, saying, that it was to the detriment of the kingdom and of military service, that the military fees and other possessions had fallen into the dead hands of the religious orders; not understanding, perchance, that the army of the Amalekites was overthrown rather by the prayers of Moses, than by the valour in combat of the children of Israel." The religious bodies, to which lands were conveyed, were corporations; and having perpetual succession, the former lords of the lands lost the benefit of their tenants' services, or the fines upon inheritance, when the property passed into the dead hand; "for that a dead hand," in the words of Coke, "yieldeth no service." The existing laws of mortmain rest upon another principle. Whilst the legislation of the end of the thirteenth century thus prevented the accumulation of unalienable real property by religious orders, the king, by an arbitrary exercise of power, destroyed the great money-capitalists of the time. The Jews, throughout England, were all seized, on one day, upon a charge of clipping the coin; and says Matthew of Westminster, "of the Jews of both sexes, there were hanged in London, two hundred and eighty, and a very great multitude in other cities of England."

* The noble collection of "Statutes of the Realm," in folio, has opened these sources of history to the student, with the advantage of most complete indexes.

Some Christians were involved in the accusation; and for most of them the king received ransom. In a few years more, in 1290, the whole community of Jews in England was banished. That, in spite of persecutions so long exercised towards them, and the general prejudice against their creed and their conduct, they still continued to flourish, and to accumulate vast wealth —much, no doubt, from the plunder of the improvident,—may be inferred from some circumstances which preceded this edict of Edward. Three or four years before their expulsion the pope addressed a bull to the archbishop of Canterbury, forbidding the association of Christians and Jews. It is on record that the bishop of Hereford, in 1286, excommunicated certain Christians of Hereford for attending a nuptial entertainment given by a rich Jewish family living in that city.* The Jews wore the badge of their tribe; but by their commercial activity and command of capital, even without violation of the statute of usury which Edward had passed, they were a numerous and powerful body, and not without some partial sympathy amongst their fellow citizens. It is difficult to understand the immediate cause of their banishment. The king seized upon their real estates, but it is not likely that these were very extensive. Their moveable property they carried with them. The proclamation commanding their departure was dated the 27th of July, 1290; and from that time to All Saints Day, between fifteen and sixteen thousand of this reviled race bade farewell to the land in which most of them had been born, and where they had their homes and their local affections—to find on some more hospitable coast, if anywhere it could be found, a refuge from that fiery persecution which men called religion, and in their gross ignorance believed that such hate was a tribute to the God of love.

It was in the spring of 1282, that the fancied security of the English government was disturbed by a national outbreak of the Welsh. On the night of Palm Sunday, David, the brother of the prince of Wales, surprised the castle of Hawarden. The justiciary, Roger de Clifford, was carried off a prisoner to the recesses of Snowdon, and all his retinue of knights and servants were put to the sword. In the interval between the marriage of Llewellyn and this outbreak, Eleanora had visited England; and there is a letter extant from her to her cousin Edward, in which she alludes to differences between the king and her husband. There appears to be little doubt that the Welsh on the border were subjected to many oppressions from the English officers. De Clifford is described in the Welsh annals as a cruel tyrant. The old national feelings of a brave but imperfectly civilised people prevented them willingly adopting the English usages, or of tamely submitting to the imperious mandates of the proud justiciaries and bailiffs of the king to whom their native prince was a vassal. The English occupied an extensive portion of the country which had been surrendered in absolute dominion, as well as that which they in some degree controlled by feudal right. It was a position that could not be permanent; and no doubt the government of Edward looked forward to the period when "the land of Wales" should be annexed to the English crown. Upon the outbreak of his brother David, the prince, Llewellyn, immediately besieged the castles of Flint and Rhuddlan. The mountain chieftains hastily assembled

* "Household Roll of Bishop Swinfield," vol. ii. p. c.

their dependents, and pouring down upon the lowlands, drove the English intruders across the marches. Edward sent for foreign aid from Gascony; collected the military tenants; and having raised a forced loan, the necessity of the case furnishing a pretext for this violation of the Charter, marched with a large force to Worcester. The courts of king's bench and the exchequer were removed to Shrewsbury. Some of the ancient tenures of manors of this period show that armed men and horses, armour, bows and arrows, and provisions, were to be found by the tenants of the crown for the king's army in Wales.* The advance of Edward was not very rapid. He was a cautious commander, and he dreaded to throw himself into the mountain passes, and pursue the revolters to their strongholds. In one battle his advance was decidedly checked. Farther, in passing the Menai strait upon a bridge of boats, so wide that forty horsemen could go over abreast, the alarm was given that a strong force was coming from their ambush in the hills; and, in a precipitate retreat, many knights and foot-soldiers perished in the turbid wintry waters. No other bridge ever crossed the Straits till Telford's beautiful suspension bridge was raised, for the more enduring purpose of peaceful intercourse with Ireland. "The ring-bolts to which Edward's bridge was fastened are still to be seen on the Caernarvonshire side, about ten yards under water at low water mark, which is considered a proof of the water of the Menai having risen about six feet since Edward built the bridge." †

Llewellyn was elated by the partial success which had as yet attended the daring enterprise in which he had engaged. He left the passes of Snowdon to be defended by his brother, and descended into the open country. It was a time of domestic grief; for his wife had died shortly before the last struggle for Welsh independence had commenced. Llewellyn fell in a sudden skirmish at Builth, in the valley of the Wye. He fell, without being recognised by the knight who had surprised his party. When his rank was discovered, his head was sent to Edward, who placed it on the walls of the Tower of London, crowned with an ivy wreath, in mockery of a prediction of Merlin, that when the English money should become circular, the prince of Wales should be crowned in London.‡ Upon the death of Llewellyn, the principal chiefs, with the exception of David, made their submission to the king, who was too politic to treat them with severity. For six months, the last of the unfortunate princely family held out against the invaders; but being betrayed, he was imprisoned in the castle of Rhuddlan; and on the 30th of September, 1283, was arraigned as a traitor before a parliament summoned to meet at Shrewsbury, and in the high street of that city David suffered the penalties of treason. The horrible forms of this execution were a precedent in cases of treason, till this barbarity went the way of other ancient outrages of human feeling.

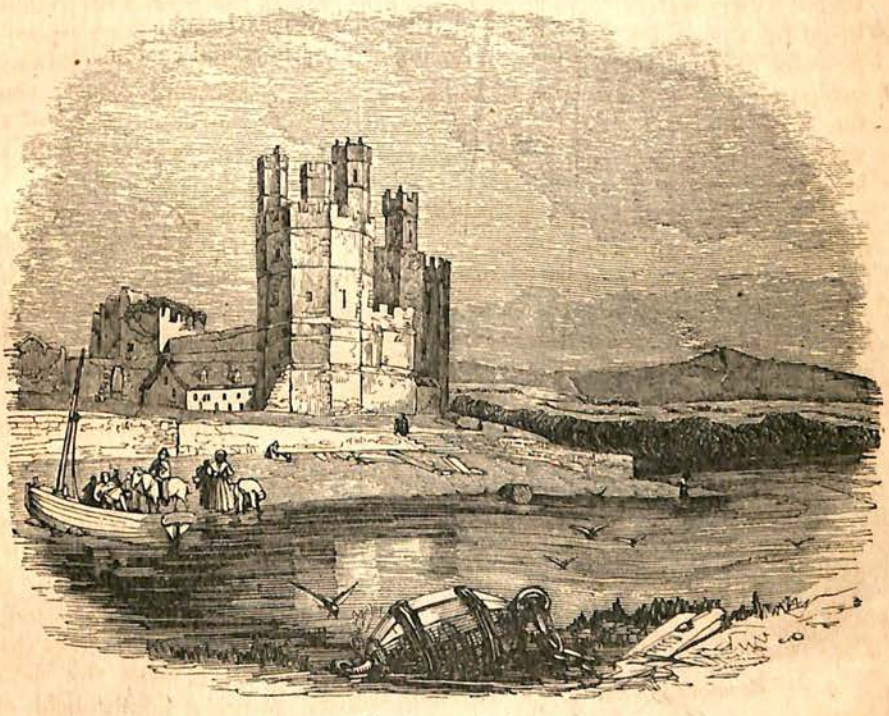
Penny of Edward I.

King Edward remained more than a year in Wales, completing the

* See Blount's Ancient Tenures, pp. 79—99. 4to. Ed. 1784.
† Archæological Journal, No. 27.
‡ See page 248.

pacification of the country. The tradition that he commanded a general slaughter of the bards rests upon very doubtful authority. Gray's noble ode will, however, prevail against the want of any historical proof. Those who have asserted that all the bards were hanged, as inciters of the people to sedition, and that their complete destruction was not effected till the days of Henry IV., are met by the fact, "That from the time of Edward to the reign of Elizabeth, the productions of the bards were so numerous, that Mr. Owen Jones, in forming a collection for that period, has already transcribed between fifty and sixty volumes in quarto, and the work is not yet completed." *

The queen of Edward was with the king during his abode in Wales; and there, at Caernarvon, her son Edward was born on the 25th of April, 1284. The child was afterwards declared prince of Wales. The noble castle of Caernarvon, in the Eagle tower of which the queen is said to have been confined, was many years in building, and had scarcely been commenced at that period.† Conway was begun to be built somewhat earlier.



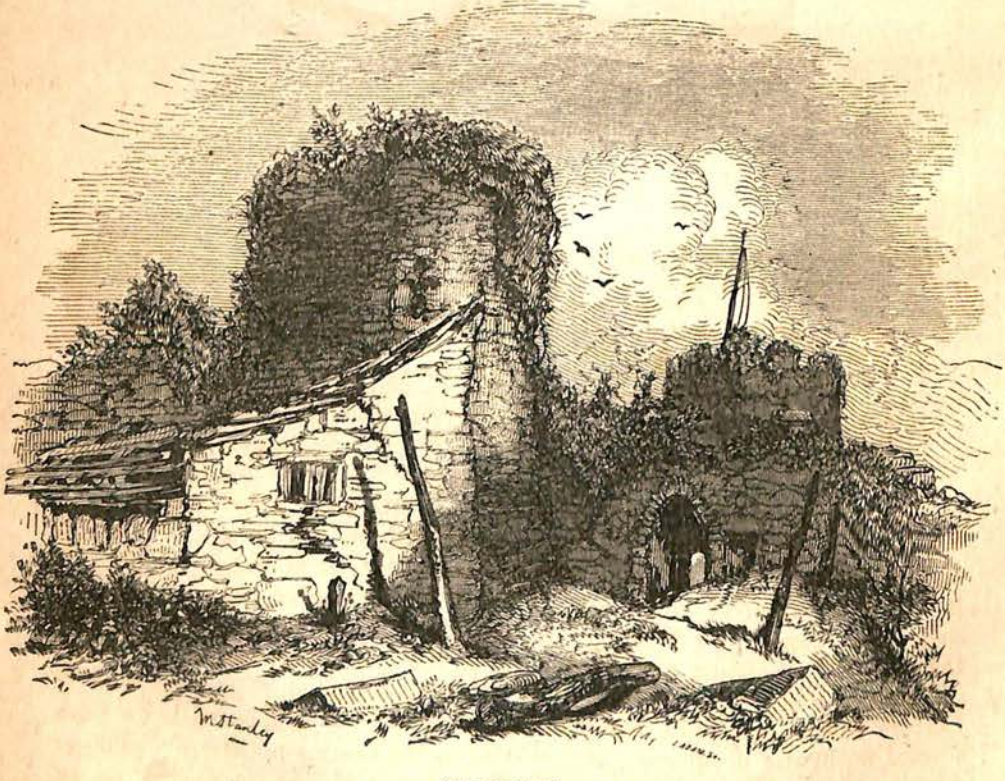
Caernarvon Castle.

However the generous feelings of our nature may produce a deep sympathy with a people that had been struggling for its independence for century after century, we cannot but regard the final subjection of Wales by Edward I. as an ultimate blessing for that beautiful portion of our island. When we can forget the harsh spirit in which the king visited those who opposed his career of ambition, we may justly bestow some admiration upon his sagacity

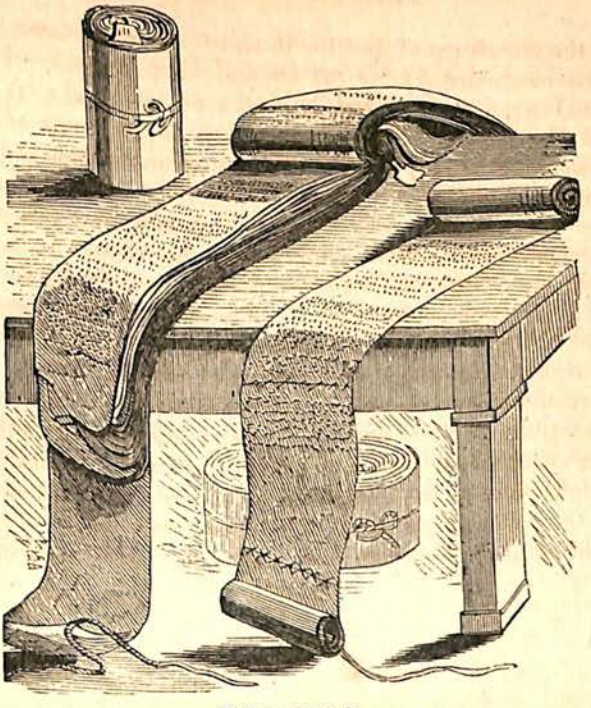
* See R. C. Hoare, in his edition of Giraldus Cambrensis.

† See Archæological Journal, No. 27.

in securing the allegiance of the mountaineers by equal laws, whilst he commanded their obedience by his armies and his fortresses. The Statutes for Wales (1284) were as essential bulwarks of his power, as his castles of Conway and Caernarvon. The ancient laws and customs of "the Land of Snowdon" were not wholly set aside; but some were abolished, some allowed, and some corrected, and certain other laws derived from England were added. The country was divided into counties; sheriffs and other officers were appointed; county courts were established; the offences to be inquired into were recited; the king's writs to be impleaded were fully set forth; all the various forms of action to be tried by inquests or juries were enumerated; and especial provision was made for the benefit of women by granting them dower, that right having been previously unknown in Wales. On the other hand, with regard to succession to an inheritance, the Welsh law that the estate was partible amongst heirs male was retained. Looking at the whole spirit of this voluminous statute, which is drawn with a clearness that modern lawgivers might do well to imitate, we must acknowledge that it endeavours to effect, in the spirit of its time, what it professes as its object—that "the people should be protected in security under fixed laws and customs."



Conway Castle.



Rolls of Records.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Domestic history of the people in the second half of the thirteenth century—Materials for the inquiry—Household Rolls—The Roll of Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford—The Bishop's city—Manor-houses, and modes of living at—Christmas feast—Domestics and labourers—Serfs—Large and small tenants—Rents—Wages of domestics—A journey to London—Provision carried for consumption on the road—State of the ways—London—The Bishop's house there—Markets and shops—The Bishop at Court—Pavements, conduits, drainage—London houses—Oxford students—The Bishop's visitations—His manor-house in the summer—Gardens, orchard, vineyard—Building operations—Wages of artificers—Furniture—Dress—Woollen manufacture—Foreign trade.

We propose in this chapter to collect, under one view, a somewhat detailed account of the Domestic History of the People, in the second half of the thirteenth century. The materials for this inquiry are singularly ample. It is not that any great observer of manners has presented such a picture of society as Chaucer has presented at the end of the fourteenth century; or that from the existing correspondence of the period we may derive those interesting glimpses of the modes of living which we find in "the Paston Letters" of the fifteenth century. But for the time of Edward I. we have several authentic documents, in addition to the various notices of disbursements contained in public records, which are sufficient to enable us to construct a satisfactory summary of the manner in which our ancestors expended their incomes about five hundred and fifty years ago. Although they lived amidst a very irregular round of domestic arrangements, sometimes

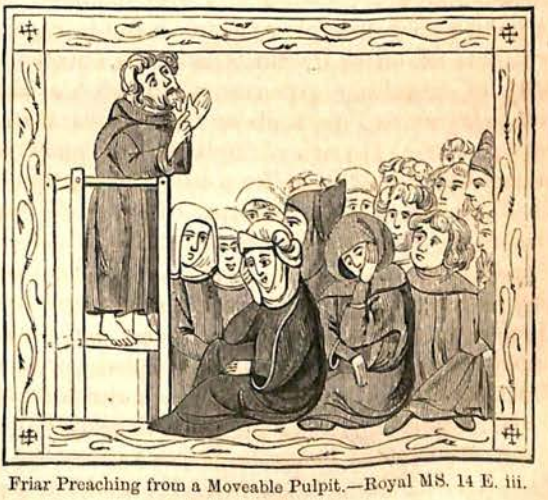
giving profuse entertainments, and at other times exercising a scrupulous economy—although the great, whether clerical or lay, were always in a state of migration from one place to another, and seldom abided long in any of their palaces or manor-houses—although many of the necessaries of life were produced upon their own estates, and transferred from the farm to the hall—they understood the great principle of wise domestic management, the keeping of exact accounts. Nearly all the materials which we possess for such a general picture of ancient domestic life are derived from house-keeping account-books of the period—Household Rolls, as they are called. In every great family there was a house-steward, who kept these accounts upon parchment from day to day, from week to week, and from month to month; and the separate skins of parchment being tacked together formed one roll, complete for a given period, being generally that of a year. All the public records of the kingdom, in which we are rich beyond most nations, are rolls, kept in the manner exhibited in the engraving at the head of the chapter. The household rolls of the period of which we are now treating, some of which have come to light within the last few years, will be referred to as we proceed in the careful, though imperfect, account which we shall endeavour to present of the private life of the English in the times of Edward I.

Of this period, the regal life was set forth in the "Wardrobe Accounts" of the king himself, for the year 1299, which have been published by the Society of Antiquaries. Under the head of "wardrobe" are included many expenses beyond those connected with apparel. The Roll of the Countess of Leicester, for the year 1265—that year of turbulence and danger—is an interesting view of the state of a noble household whilst its head was engaged in a great public enterprise, which ended in the ruin of his family, however it might have advanced the liberties of his country. There are minor accounts, chiefly of travelling expenses, to which we shall refer. Public records, whether known as Pipe Rolls or Close Rolls, throw much light on these documents. But a Household Roll, having more relation to general life and manners than those of the king and the countess, has been recently published, with most valuable annotations. It is a Household Roll of a Bishop of Hereford.* The bishop, Swinfield, has a palace at Hereford, a house in Worcester, and a house in London. He has many manor-houses, at each of which he has a farm. He has stables for many horses, kennels for his hounds, and mews for his hawks. His kitchens reek with every variety of food; his cellars are filled with wine, and his spiceries with foreign luxuries. He brews and he bakes, and he makes his own candles. He buys cloth, and a tailor fashions it into garments for himself and his servants. He is constantly moving from manor-house to manor-house; and the domestic utensils, the brass pots, and the earthenware jugs, are always moving with him. We can trace him on a long journey from Hereford to London, and back again, and learn how he fared upon the road. We go with him into quiet country places, when he is out on his visitations; and see how he makes his way,

* "A Roll of the Household Expenses of Richard de Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford, during part of the years 1289 and 1290. Edited by the Rev. John Webb." Camden Society, 2 vols. 1854, 1855. This is unquestionably the most interesting contribution of authentic materials for the history of ancient manners which has yet appeared, and its value is doubled by the rare skill of its editor.

with numerous horsemen, along difficult roads, where guides are sometimes needed to save the party from dangerous fords or deceitful quagmires. We know exactly what he pays his domestics, and what the various commodities for the sustenance of the large household cost. We can judge of the amount of the comforts by which this numerous family is surrounded; and form a tolerable estimate of the refinement which existed, when many retainers were littered down in a great hall, which served all purposes, and servants were well contented with the stable as their accustomed dormitory. Such private history, we believe, makes all public history more intelligible.

Of the provincial-town life of the bishop we see very little. He is not on the most friendly terms with the burgesses of Hereford. His jurisdiction was constantly clashing with that of the civil magistrate. Half the city was called the bishop's fee, where he was supreme. At the time of the annual fair his power was paramount over the whole city. The citizens were constantly disputing the feudal right of the bishop to control them; and in Hereford, as in other towns, the ancient power of the lords, whether that of prelate or noble, was gradually but reluctantly yielding to the authority of general law. The soke-lords of London were thus in perpetual conflict with the municipal rulers; and were constantly setting up certain privileges, such as that of the bishop of London to a seignorial oven in Cornhill, which greatly interfered with the equal progress of society. Bishop Swinfield is rarely at his episcopal city, the cathedral of which was so frequented by pilgrims and devotees from all parts of the kingdom, that the offerings of wax at the altars became a matter of dispute between the prebendaries and the treasurer, as to which this valuable perquisite should belong. The bishop was probably not on very good terms with the great body of his Hereford clergy; for he was a constant patron of the order of Minorites—the preaching friars, who were generally popular with the laity, though viewed with jealousy by other religious orders. We find Swinfield himself preaching upon his journeys—a duty to which bishops seldom applied themselves. He had risen to his high rank from a humble beginning, having been chaplain and secretary to the previous bishop. Of no distinguished influence or grasping ambition, he discharges the duties of his office, which was clearly not a position of mere luxury and idleness, as a vigilant administrator. When we trace him, therefore, to his various manor-houses of Sugwas, of Bosbury, of Ledbury, of Prestbury, of Whitborne, of Ross, of Colwall, and to his episcopal castle of Bishop's Castle, on the Welsh border, we find that he is thus moving about in the discharge of his official duties. At each of his



Friar Preaching from a Moveable Pulpit.—Royal MS. 14 E. iii.

manor-houses the bishop's hall is his feudal court. Here he sits in baronial state to receive the homage of tenants, to sentence ecclesiastics to penalties for offences against the canon law, to threaten or excommunicate lay offenders against public morals. Here he entertains the suitors of his court, and his dependents, on high festivals. The hall, from which the whole manor-house derives its name, is the one great room of the establishment. All other accommodation is limited and subordinate. "The greater part of the episcopal palace at Hereford appears to have been originally a hall, with pillars and arches of wood."* The manor-house was also, for the most part, a hall. One private chamber was allotted to the lord of the house. The cook had his kitchen, a separate but adjacent building. There was the sewery; and there was the butlery. But the courts were held; the audiences were given; the guests were dined; the wine was drunk; and as night ended the solemn feast or the lenten fasting, all slept on the wooden floor of the hall, strewed with dry rushes in winter, and green fodder in summer—with hay or with straw.

The Swinfield Household Roll would have given us a bishop's year, had two months not been lost to us in the destruction of two skins of the parchment record. We can trace him from the 30th of September in 1289 to the 23rd of July in 1290. We miss the interesting period of the corn-harvest of the latter year. As it is, we may perhaps better illustrate the condition of this household, and thus infer many particulars of the condition of the people generally, by following the course of these ten months so carefully registered. They embrace a period of royal festivity, and general discomfort. King Edward, in 1289, had returned from Gascony, having been absent from England for three years. He was about to marry his daughter, Joanna, to the great earl of Gloucester, Gilbert de Clare, the most powerful of the barons; and he kept his court at Westminster with unusual pomp. But a gloom was shed over England by those atmospheric disturbances which always brought alarm, for they were threatenings of scarcity. It is recorded by a contemporary historian, Wikes, that from the feast of St. Michael, to the feast of the Purification (February 2nd), there was incessant rain day and night, without a ray of sunshine, and without frost or snow. A year of dearness followed. During these four months our bishop was migrating from manor to manor, or travelling to or from London.

On the 30th of October, the episcopal household comes to Sugwas, on the left bank of the Wye, about four miles from Hereford. Here the bishop has his mill, his dovecote, and his fishery. The river yields salmon, and the tenants pay dues of eels. Friday, Saturday, and Wednesday are days of abstinence. On Sunday, October 2nd, the household is abundantly feasted. At the generous board there are consumed three-quarters of beef, three sheep, half a pig, eight geese, ten fowls, twelve pigeons, nine partridges, and unnumbered larks. To this abundant food there is a due proportion of wine and beer. Bread has been baked on the Saturday. The baker is an important person. He always precedes the family in their wanderings, that the pantry may be well stored when the hungry travellers arrive. On the days of

* "Domestic Architecture in England, from the Conquest to the end of the Thirteenth Century;" by G. T. Hudson Turner;—a work of original research, and lucid detail.

abstinence we find a variety of fish, which the present great white-bait feasts of the Thames can scarcely rival. We have sticks of eels, sold by twenty-five on a stick, according to the statute; there is salmon from the weir; there are tench, and much small fry called minnows; lampreys there are, and lamperns; salt-herrings and salted cod are always in store; and dried cod is brought from Aberdeen. Some of the fish is bought at the towns of Hereford, and Gloucester, and Worcester, according to their vicinity to the manor-houses; and the cook often goes with a sumpter-horse to fetch the supply. In winter we have oysters bought by the gallon; and in May and June the fresh mackerel furnishes a new delicacy. The trout, too, is produced at the table in the season of the May-fly. Gruel is served up in abundance; and soup is mentioned. But of fresh vegetables there is a scant supply, as may be inferred from the entry of salted greens. From his manor of Sugwas the bishop proceeds to the manor of Bosbury, where he remains two months. There are here some vestiges of strong buildings, on the site of the manor-house. In no other place does the episcopal lord remain so long as at Bosbury. It appears to have been the chief storehouse of good things for the consumption of the household. It is now the Martinmas season, when the salting-tubs are filled with every variety of flesh to be preserved for use through the coming winter, when ancient agricultural economy could produce little fresh meat. We may have some notion of the amount of this consumption of salt provisions, when we find that fifty-two beeves were brought in from the different farms, some travelling from the distant manor of Early, near Reading. Sheep and swine, in large numbers, were also salted down; and many of the internal parts of the animals went to the pickling vessels. The salt was purchased at Worcester, being brought there from the pits at Droitwich; and the commodity not being a plentiful one, half a seam,—that measure being equivalent to 100 lbs.,—was borrowed from a preceptory of Templars. But beef, mutton, and pork did not constitute the whole of the salted food. The epicure of modern days will lament over the reckless waste which consigned the fattest venison of the bishop's parks and chases to this levelling equality with common flesh. The stud-groom, the huntsmen and their hounds, the stable-helpers, the boys of the farm, were driving the deer from their thick coverts, to fall before the unerring shafts from the cross-bow. The hides produced by this enormous slaughter were partly sold, and some were manufactured into leather after a rude domestic fashion. The superfluous fat of the animals was converted into home-manufactured candles; and on one day of this slaughtering time, 80 lbs. are recorded to have been made. Before we leave this subject of the provision of substantial food for a very large scale of housekeeping, let us briefly notice the Christmas feast at Prestbury, another great manor-house, to which the bishop had removed at that festive season. At Bosbury, five casks of wine had been laid in, having been brought from Bristol, one of the chief marts for foreign wine in the west of England. It was conveyed under the care of the bishop's servants, by boat up the Severn. From Bosbury to Prestbury, a cask was sent for the Christmas festival. There was a great brewing there in December, so that the enormous quantity drank at Christmas, was not "jolly good ale and old." As we constantly find in these times, the brewing was under the management of women. The breweress, the sempstress, and the house-cleaner, are the

only females of whom we catch a glimpse in the bishop's establishment. All things had been set in order previous to the arrival of the lord of the household. The kitchen and the ovens had been repaired, and a penthouse with a dresser had been built from the kitchen to the hall-door. Charcoal had been burned, and brought in from the woods. Loads of thorns had been drawn from the coppices to heat the ovens, and to crackle under the pots. Canvas had been given out for the kitchen strainers. The spice-box had been filled with cloves, mace, cinnamon, ginger, pepper, cummin, aniseed, and coriander. Amongst the spices we find given out a pound or two of that valuable article, sugar, with which the crusades had familiarised western Europe. Sugar was, however, so commonly used at this period, that on one occasion 100 lbs. are purchased in London by the bishop's factor; and in the provincial town of Ross, a single pound is bought for eightpence. That indispensable article of ancient cookery, saffron, has a tub for its especial reception. Large stores of crockery-ware are laid in. This luxury seems to have been peculiar to the bishop's establishment; for certainly the use of dishes, plates, saucers, and jugs of earthenware was not common in England, when wooden trenchers and leathern jacks appeared at every board. Jugs and dishes were expensive articles of domestic use; for we find constant entries of new purchases. The fragile utensils were moved about from place to place, in company with the iron and brass vessels of the kitchen; and in rutty roads, where the cart was sometimes overturned, the breakage was constant and considerable. All things then being in order, the Christmas feast begins. The Eve is a strict fast. Christmas-day was on a Sunday. On the great festival there were served up, two carcases and three quarters of beef, with calves, does, pigs, fowls, bread, and cheese, ten sectaries of red wine and one of white. There appear to have been guests, from the additional number of horses in the stable. The judicious editor of the bishop's Roll reasonably conjectures that much of this enormous feast was given to the poor. The total expenditure of that Christmas-day amounted to 4*l.* 16*s.* 3½*d.*—a reckoning of about 100*l.* of present money.*

John de Kemeseye, the house-steward, enters in his roll everything which comes from the farms; and he affixes a price, as of money paid to the bailiff. We see how this principle ensures correctness of accounts between the producers and consumers. From the farm comes into the hall, corn, hay, oxen, sheep, pigs, milk. We have very imperfect notices of agricultural proceedings; yet there must have been constant labour required to meet such large consumption. We find incidentally, that wheat, oats, and barley were sown in Lent. We have an item of the cost of gloves given to reapers in the harvest time of 1289, and of board-wages paid to servants of the household, who went out to assist in gathering-in the hay and corn. It is clear that some of the domestics lived in the farm-house attached to each hall; and some of these were women, who were house-cleaners, sempstresses, and breweresses. John, the carter, and Roger, the thresher, were probably farm inmates. The two farriers of the establishment, who seem to have been very busy with sick horses, and with making new horse-shoes out of old ones,

* We take an intermediate multiplier of twenty to ascertain present value. Mr. Hallam considers twenty-four or twenty-five times the price named to represent such value. Others say fifteen times. There can be no exact scale.

and the horse-trainer (ambulator) lived happily, we may conjecture, with their equine friends. Harpin, the falconer, and John, the huntsman, seem to have been privileged and confidential domestics. But amidst the entries of wages paid, we miss the numerous farm-labourers that must have been employed, in an age when hand-labour derived little assistance from the tools and machines of modern times. These, no doubt, were the serfs—the born thralls—the bondsmen of one manor, with no choice but that of abiding from the cradle to the grave in that one spot—the mere labourers, carefully provided for, as regarded their sustenance,—perhaps not overworked; having their hours of recreation; not destitute of the family affections. Their condition is as little noticed by the chroniclers as that of the cattle which they tended. But they were gradually passing into the state of free labourers. One record connected with bishop Swinfield has an interest for us, and for those who come after us, which the good prelate and his most learned chaplains could never have anticipated. Robert Crul was a bailiff upon one of the farms of the bishop's manor of Ross. He was a *villein regardant*, with a mother, wife, and children living with him. In 1302, by a solemn deed he was manumitted by the bishop; and "Robert Crul, of Hamme, and Matilda his wife, with all his offspring begotten and to be begotten, together with all his goods holden and to be holden," was rendered "for ever free and quit from all yoke of servitude." Robert, the churl of Hamme, was the ancestor of John Kyrle, the Man of Ross. If the poet who immortalised the benefactor of his fellow-creatures, at a time when slavery had died out, had known this fact, he might have added a couplet to show how the manumission of a slave in the 13th century had ameliorated the lot of the wretched in the 18th. Robert Crul, by his industry in the service of the bishop, was enabled to buy his freedom for forty marks, and he became the founder of two honourable families.* This power of rising, however slowly and painfully, out of the condition in which they were born,—a condition to which the Saxon peasant had long been subjected by the Norman lord,—was, no doubt, the sustaining hope of many of the more frugal, diligent, and intelligent villans of that age. But from the large sum which the bishop exacted from Robert Crul we may judge that there was no wide sympathy for that class by whose labour the bishop's household was maintained, and himself upheld in the rough splendour which befitted his rank. We cannot affirm that there was no general disposition to raise the great body of labourers in the scale of comfort and independence—there is some evidence to the contrary. But this, and all succeeding indications of the position of the people, in relation to their born masters, will show that the numberless producers were held, as a class, to be only fulfilling their natural destiny when they toiled without hope for the privileged consumers of the produce of their toil. In our own immediate times, in which the degrees of station are, in some particulars, as rigidly preserved as in the feudal ages, there has been the awakening of a spirit, which, in advocating the common claims to regard for the whole brotherhood of man, is gradually averting some of the dangers which must result from the spectacle of helpless misery existing by the side of callous indulgence. A reconstruction of society, such as would banish poverty from the earth, is one

* This is first given, amongst many other interesting and novel facts, in the "Household Roll of Bishop Swinfield."

of the idle dreams of impracticable enthusiasm. But an amelioration of the condition of the poor, through raising them in the scale of self-respect by kindly intercourse; and by summoning all the powers of scientific administration to sweep away the habits of economical ignorance that we have inherited—this is the lesson which we must draw from the contemplation of that state of low civilisation of which the public and private records tell of slavery as the fate of the many, and of unseemly discomfort even in the condition of the more favoured few.

It is not easy to form an estimate of the state of ancient serfdom in its varying degrees. The manumitted bailiff of bishop Swinfield had progenitors who were slaves in the most wretched and degraded condition. He was born in slavery, but had gradually acquired property which he was permitted to accumulate whilst rendering certain services to his lord. But he held that property upon sufferance. The general condition of the villans was probably inferior to that of Robert Crul. They were oppressed in many ways. There is a "Song of the Husbandman" of this period, who complains of the persecutions of the hayward, the woodward, and the bailiff; of the beadle who comes for a tax, and says, "prepare me silver for the green wax;" and to seek silver for the king, he sold his seed, and his cattle were taken from the field.* The consistory courts, too, did for the rough peasants of the thirteenth century what misjudging overseers did in later times—they drove them to church with "Meg or Mal," and "a priest as proud as a peacock weds us both."† The tenants who leased lands were subject to many exactions. The lord's bull and boar were free, under the conditions of the tenures, to range at night through their standing corn and grass; and the tenants' sheep were always to be folded on the lords' land. There were large farmers and cottier tenants in those days. From a survey of the village of Hawsted, in Suffolk, in 1288, we find that seven farmers held nine hundred and sixty-eight acres of arable land; which, with a little meadow, averaged a hundred and forty acres each; whilst thirty-six held only eleven acres each, upon an average. That the land was indifferently farmed we may well believe, by learning that the highest rent was sevenpence an acre, and that some land was let as low as a farthing an acre. No doubt these small tenants did services as *villeins regardants*. There were fifty houses in the Hawsted village.‡ Small allotments were given at a nominal rent, or were held without rent, in lieu of money payments for labour; and the labourers were fed in addition, chiefly upon porridge.

The domestic servants of the Swinfield establishments were fed, clothed, and lodged. They received, in addition, half-yearly wages. The confidential members of the household, who were of gentle blood, with names derived from places, received ten shillings half-yearly. There were two clerks, probably lay, at half-a-crown. The highest paid servant was John the farrier, at six shillings and eightpence. There was another farrier at half these wages. John the carter, Robert the carter, Harpin the falconer, and William the porter, had each three shillings and fourpence. Ywon (Evan) the launder, Thomas the palfreyman, and Roberlard the butler, had each half-a-crown; and so had John the messenger. In other families, amongst

* "Political Songs," p. 129. † *Ibid.* p. 159.
‡ Sir John Cullum's "History of Hawsted," p. 94.

which was that of the countess of Leicester, the messengers were distinguished by their qualities,—as Slingaway, Bolett (bullett), Truebodie, and Gobithistie (go a bit hasty). Henry de Beckford, of the bishop's chamber, had half-a-crown. There were twenty-two younger domestics,—garciones (gossoons) and pages, at stipends varying from two shillings to eighteenpence, a shilling, and sixpence. There were forty-one members of this household. In the stables there were generally upwards of forty horses, for the use of the establishment.

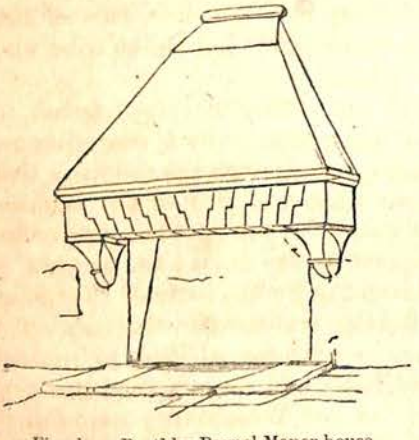
On the 20th of December, the bishop and his retinue set out from Prestbury, on a journey to London. The cavalcade is composed of the bishop, on his new palfrey, bought at Hereford; his chaplain, and house-steward, John de Kemeseye; various household officers well armed; the cook, the farrier, and other retainers of the kitchen and the stable; sumpter-horses, bearing changes of raiment and other valuables; carts laden with meat and wine, and with pots and pans, and drinking-cups. There are fifty-one horses in this troop. Harbingers precede them to look out for quarters. They lodge the first night at a vacant manor-house belonging to the abbot of Glocester, near Fairford, where they eat the food they have providently brought, and the servants of the house furnish them with brushwood for their fires, oats for their horses, and litter for their own lodging on the floor. These servants have money "to drink," a time-honoured custom. The next day they move on to Farringdon. There is no welcome here from knight or monk;—the editor of the Roll thinks they put up at an inn. Mr. Hudson Turner holds that, although there were drinking-houses for wine, and ale-wives sold beer, there was "no establishment, at this period, which supplied, besides drink, food and beds. It was not until the middle of the fourteenth century that the hostel or tavern had its origin." * At Farringdon, then, we see the bishop's party putting up at a house with very small accommodation. Five men were hired to fetch in brushwood and litter. The cook unpacked his hampers; but he could not prepare his supper without hiring additional kitchen utensils. The provident bishop carried some of his own Bosbury venison with him, to supply the deficiencies of road-side fare. He probably had his Mazerine cup at hand, or one of richly chased silver, out of which he quaffed his Bordeaux wine,—as his worthy steward says, "*de quo bibit frequenter.*" Spoons of silver he would have, and each of his household would

Cup found in the Ruins of Glastonbury Abbey.

* "Domestic Architecture," p. 122.

carry his own knife. Forks of silver, whatever has been believed to the contrary, were known at this period; though the natural finger and thumb long kept out the foreign luxury. In the hall of one of bishop Swinfield's houses we find a lavatory, where the hands of the company might be washed before and after the meal. At Farringdon, the house which gave the party shelter might have its one pot and hanger, and its gridiron; but the cook was unused to such poor arrangements and to the inconvenience of borrowing, and he took care, when the troop returned from London, that five new brass cauldrons should accompany the luggage. It may be doubtful whether the bishop himself found a bed, if he had a separate bed-room. In any one of his own manor-houses he would lie in great state, with his tester over him, such as modern usage reluctantly abandons at the bidding of sanitary reformers. Certainly at Farringdon he would have no glass window in his private room, such as he had constructed at the cost of six shillings and eightpence for his luxurious chamber at Bosbury. Perhaps there was a fireplace, where a blaze of brushwood might chase away the dampness of this wet December.

Early English Bed. (From Ancient MS.)



Fireplace, Boothby Pagnel Manor-house.

On the 30th they arrive at Wantage. It is a fast-day, and they have their conger-eels and their stock-fish cooked, having bought the needful charcoal. The quantity of beer they consume is enormous,—sixty-four gallons, costing four shillings and sevenpence farthing. From Wantage they travel on to Reading, over the downs where Alfred hunted and fought. But the ways are difficult; the open country is soaked with the constant rain; the fords are not to be blindly trusted,—and so a guide must be engaged. He was probably a drover or shepherd. The countess of Leicester hired "Dobbe" the shepherd to escort her from Odiham to Porchester. But the dangerous journey was terminated by a happy welcome. The great abbot of Reading was the host of the good bishop; and here, on the 31st, Swinfield entered this noble establishment, the hospitality of which was the theme of William of Malmesbury's warmest praise. In these excellent quarters the

party remained four nights. Hugh, the harper, played in the abbot's hall, and his skill received a reward of twelvepence from the bishop, who also bestowed a dole of bread upon the poor of Reading, costing seven shillings and sixpence. On the 4th of January they set forward for London, and reached Bedfont, crossing the ferry at Staines. Here their travelling stock of provisions was exhausted, and during their stay of three nights, William the janitor, as commissary, had gone as far as Cookham to obtain a supply. Here sprats make their appearance from the metropolitan market. On the 7th of January they are safely lodged in London, at the bishop's own house in Old Fish Street.

At a time when the bishop of Hereford's presence was wanted in London, it is difficult at first to understand why these long halts occur on the road. It appears from other evidence that the state of the roads was so bad that a cart and four horses, engaged for six days, rested four days out of the six; and that a halt on alternate days of travel was a customary matter of necessity, in the time before turnpikes.* On a journey from Oxford to Canterbury of a person of rank, in 1289, we find, on the road from Canterbury to London, evidence of the great highway offering ample accommodation for the hungry traveller. At Rochester this party breakfast on bread, rusks, beer, wine, shambles-meat, and a hen. At Dartford, they sup on bread, shambles-meat, a hen, a plover, with vegetables, and abundant beer and wine. They pay also for candles and fuel, for oats and horse-shoes; and they give a beggar a half-penny.† We often find our good bishop giving threepence or fourpence in alms when he is on his journeys; he is moved to give fourpence to a blind man; and once his liberality extended to bestowing twopence on a street-sweeper in Hereford, which gift seems to imply that the cleanliness of the ways, in these distant times, as well as in our own, was left to the tribe who ask for alms when they should be paid for labour.

The bishop of Hereford's house in Old Fish Street was appurtenant to the see. Stow says it was built of stone and timber. By a wise arrangement the bishop let it to a worthy pepperer (grocer), upon the condition that the merchant should resign its occupation when the lord of the mansion required it for his own use. The stables were now put in order; the rooms and offices were cleaned; rushes were bought for the floors; the benches in the hall had new seats; and straw was brought in for the litter of the undignified portion of the household. Great feasting was there in this hall. The gurnet, the sturgeon, and the oyster made a welcome addition to the fish meal. The household and the guests had hares and rabbits; and the king sent a side of venison as a present. London and Westminster were full of court visitors, and a Convocation was sitting, as well as a Parliament. The ungenial season, and the throng of strangers, made everything dear. Wheat was double its price as registered in Herefordshire. The horses, fifty in number, were very costly. Thomas de la Dene, a most judicious manager, bought a rick of hay; but oats he could not obtain in London for money, and he sent for them into the country (*extra villam*). He laid in, moreover, large stocks of goods for future use, which the capital could best supply—cloth, furs, wax, spices. He exchanged old brass pots for new. He bought

* "Expenses of John of Brabant, in 1292."—Camden Miscellany, vol. II. p. iii.

† "Travelling Expenses in Thirteenth Century."—Retrospective Review, vol. XV. p. 275.

boots and shoes for his lord, and a pair of boots for himself. This excellent purveyor put his packages on board of boats at Westminster, where he seems to have purchased his various goods. The provision markets were all around the bishop's residence—the fish-market in Old Fish Street, the provision-market in Eastcheap, famous from the Saxon times. And yet he might have dealt well in London city for his desired stores. In the market of the Standard, near St. Paul's, were goldsmiths, and pepperers, and mercers. In Cornhill and Coleman Street were linen and woollen clothiers. In Lothbury were the braziers. All along the great line through Lombard Street and West Chepe were shops with every variety of goods. But Thomas de la Dene chose to chaffer in the courtly quarters. Whilst these feastings and bargainings were going forward in his household, bishop Swinfield was leading a more ostentatious life than in his quiet manor-houses. On Sunday, the 8th of January, he repairs in state to Westminster, and there he presents the king with a purse containing £66. 13*s*. 4*d*., and the queen with another sum of £33. 6*s*. 8*d*. There is an air of magnificence in all his actions. At a feast in Westminster hall, on that Sunday, the roof rang with the sounds of minstrelsy—the harp, the dulcimer, and the viol *—and our bishop presented twenty shillings to each of the two chief harpers of the king. In that hall sate royal ladies amidst the prelates and nobles. Joanna of Acre, whose wedding was approaching, and her sister Margaret, who was to be married to John of Brabant, would be there, with their rich quintises, as the costly robes of that day were called. The preposterous trains, and the muffled chins, were the ridicule of the fashion-satirists of this time. Bishop Swinfield goes to court each day in a boat; but some of his retinue ride thither to attend upon him. From their house near Queenhithe, they would cross the river Fleet by a bridge; pass on by the great convent of White Friars; then leave the magnificent house and church of the Templars on the left; and, going through the bar known as Temple, be on the common highway of the Strand. In that rough road there were bridges also to cross; and in the wet season, the footway, generally very foul, must have been almost impassable. In the city, however, there were foot-pavements, even at this early period; and, very shortly afterwards, each housekeeper was compelled to pave the footway before his own door, even as far as Westminster.† There were conduits of water, though water-carriers abounded. Henry III. set the evil example—which we have followed till the abomination can no longer be borne—of

Ladies' Costume, time of Edward I. (Sloane MS. 3983.)

* See woodcut at the end of this chapter.

† "Domestic Architecture," p. 96.

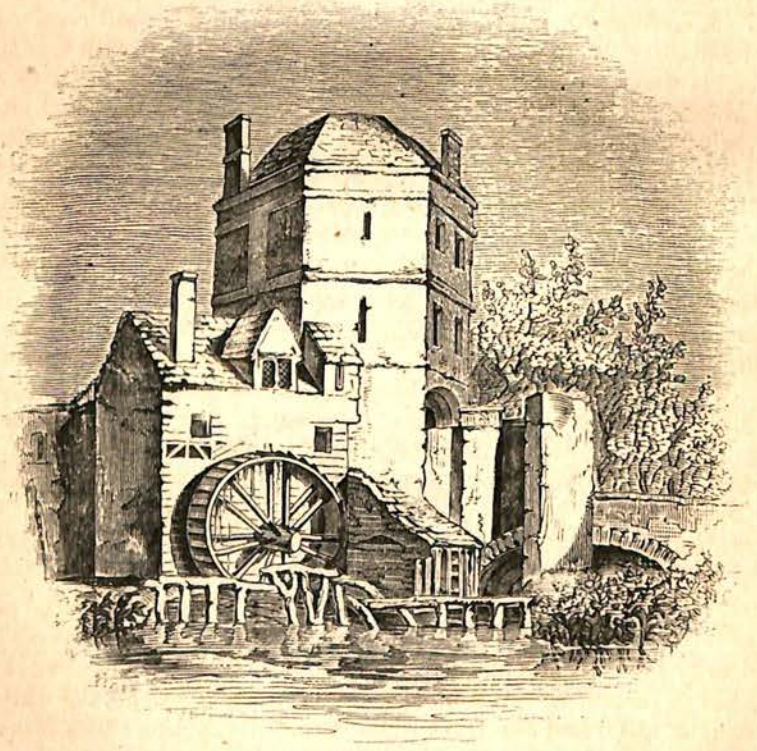
carrying the refuse water from the royal kitchens by a sewer into the Thames. The open drains of the streets emptied themselves alsc into the river; but the deep cesspools of the dwelling-houses, of which there are abundant traces, prevented that universal pollution which we have too long endured, in the exchange of one evil for another.* The houses of London were for the most

The School of Pythagoras, Cambridge.*

part of wood; some were of wooden framework filled up with clay. There were external as well as internal staircases; the narrow windows had wooden shutters, which opened from the bottom, and were lifted up upon a hinge, and some had iron bars. Some stone houses there were, like that known as the Jew's house at Lincoln, which was more substantial and costly than those of the burgesses in general. But such a house, like the inferior dwellings, only consisted of a ground floor, and one storey above. All the London houses were low. Henry III., according to Matthew Paris, expressed his surprise at the houses of three or four storeys when he visited the French capital in 1254,—a difference which the two cities have still preserved. All the London houses were whitewashed. Coal was not burnt as common fuel, though it was occasionally used. The black smoke did not yet mingle with the heavy atmosphere; and, in an age of dirt, London looked brighter than in an age of cleanliness.

* This building was a grange of the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century which had an external staircase, and of which the ground-room has been vaulted. It is much spoiled by modern alterations.—*Turner's Domestic Architecture.*

The bishop of Hereford was very soon tired of London. He excused himself from attending the parliament; and, after a residence of a week, retired to Kensington. He remained here three days, in the manor-house of the abbot of Abingdon, which stood upon the spot where Holland House was afterwards built. He then set out on his way homewards, resting two days at his own manor-house of Early. Here came to see him two students who were maintained by him at the University of Oxford; their names were Kingswood, and there was a servant of that name in the bishop's establishment. During the vacations they usually visited their patron. The expense of their maintenance at the University, and their incidental charges, seem to have amounted to half a mark per week—a considerable sum, if valued by the comparative power of money in those times. Six shillings and eightpence weekly for two scholars was a sum probably not far short of three hundred pounds a year of our own times. It is pleasant to know, from this record, that the great men of those days had an affectionate regard for youths of promise, and by giving them the best education opened their way to



Bacon's Tower, which formerly stood on the Bridge at Oxford.

positions of public usefulness. Oxford was, at this period, in the highest repute. It was the abode of Friar Bacon, and of other great scholars. The natural sciences were rising out of the darkness of polemical discussions, to give a practical direction to the speculations of philosophy. It was the age when the human mind was throwing off its shackles of thought and action.

Roger Bacon's tower did not fall upon a more learned man; but other men have carried forward his spirit of investigation, and each succeeding generation has witnessed new powers of observation and experiment, producing results as influential upon the condition of mankind as the great friar's supposed discovery of gunpowder.

The bishop and his retinue have returned safely to their home of Prestbury by the 25th of January. Small accidents there have been in the journey; a cart has been upset, and cups and dishes have to be replaced by the cook from the market of Gloucester. While he was away, two boys had been left, at board-wages, in the care of the hounds; and they are paid fourteen shillings and tenpence for their month—not a low rate of earnings. The time of the bishop's visitations was now approaching. Some large portion of the expense of these journeys was defrayed by what are termed procurations; most of the religious houses and incumbents being legally obliged to provide lodgings for man and horse when the bishop, or the archdeacon, arrived with his retinue. The burthens which religious houses had to bear, when a proud ecclesiastic came upon them with a hundred horses, and with hawks and hounds, had been reduced into moderate dimensions by papal and archiepiscopal regulations. Sometimes, therefore, we find the bishop of Hereford received with liberal hospitality; at others he is obliged to be contented with a little hay, litter for his men, and brushwood for his fire. He begins his progress on the 3rd of March. A messenger has preceded him, bearing letters and citations in the painted box, which was his badge of office. The way lies through clayey roads, where the shoes are dragged off the horses' feet, and there are frequent halts for the farrier, who accompanies the train, with large store of shoes and nails. Five miles only were accomplished the first day. They go on at the same moderate rate, sometimes lodged in a rich abbey; occasionally entertained by a lay impropriator, who was bound to provide the visitors; and sometimes having a small gift from a resident incumbent. At one place, while the bishop is preaching, all the horses are baited at the cost of a single penny. During this journey the bishop makes a long halt at Kynlett in Shropshire. He has a heavy business on his mind. He has to address a long letter to the pope, on no less important a subject than the canonisation of his predecessor, Bishop Cantilupe. A letter was then a solemn document, not hastily despatched, as great ministers, ecclesiastic or lay, now conduct their correspondence. It was a document, fairly transcribed on the whitest parchment, to be preserved for generations. This was the age before the great invention of paper, which made letters more universal, and allowed missives to be sent upon domestic subjects, though still by special messengers. It was centuries before a post existed. Yet much writing was done by the great; and we have a record, in this roll, of a hundred and fifty skins of parchment being bought at Oxford for three shillings and fourpence. The bishop proceeds after two days' seclusion; he crosses the Wye to visit the rich abbot and brethren of the Cistercian house of Tintern, which was in another diocese. Here he worships, on the feast of Saint Gregory, in that beautiful church, which had been just completed, whose ruins, now standing as if time approached them with reverential love, still inspire as holy thoughts as when the vaulted roof echoed the monk's loud chaunt, and the long procession moved along the aisles where we now tread upon the softest green sward, and look

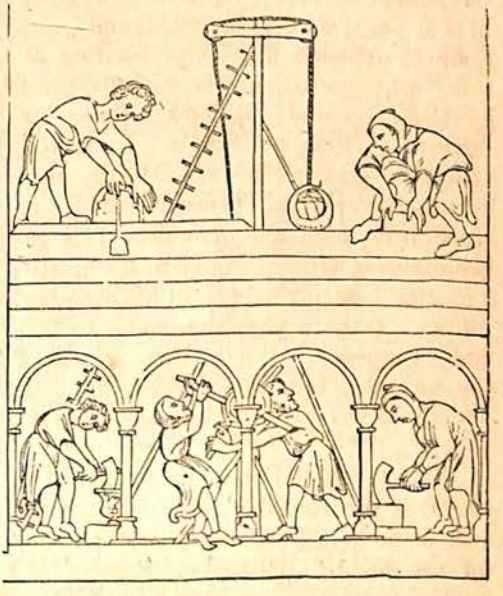
up at the open sky, as we hear the twittering of the sparrows amidst the tall ivy-crowned columns. We cannot follow our bishop in his progress, though he moved through the most charming of England's landscapes, now following the course of the Wye, halting at Ross and Monmouth—now reaching the Welsh borders of Irchenfield, and giving a penny each to two harpers, who came to welcome him—now feasting at the abbey of Dore in "the Gilden vale," whose woods and corn-fields, and fruitful meadows, have been eulogised by Camden—and now, entertaining his border-friends in his own strong fortress of Bishop's Castle. In this spring he was out on two rounds of visitation—three weeks in March, and seven weeks in April and May—a season too early for pleasant travelling, but made endurable by kindly welcome from high and humble. The good prelate bears these fatigues and hospitalities without injury to his health; though on one occasion he burns a "mortar" or night-light in his chamber, which was only done in the case of illness. Once a physician came to the manor-house, who had a fee of six and eightpence. We find no record of fees to the barber for bleeding—the universal remedy for every ailment at this period. Some valet of the household was probably the blood-letter of bishop and clerks, of grooms and pages.

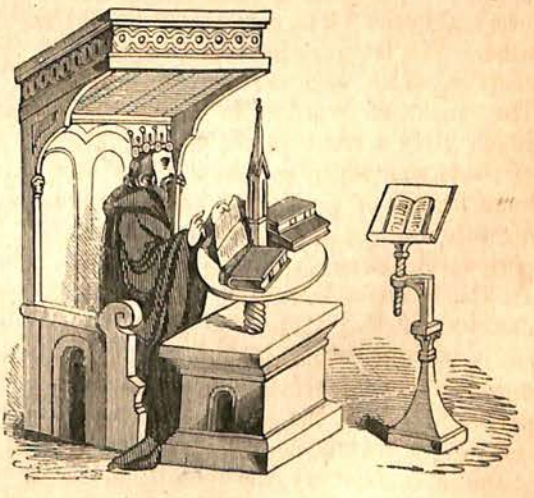
Bishop Swinfield is again settled in his manor-house of Bosbury. The old course of generous diet is resumed. Green-peas and beans make their appearance at table in June and July. Grass is cut, and brought into the stables for the horses. Geese are bought, and put up to fatten. We have the garden, the meadow, and the poultry-yard on the domain. The number of eggs provided on certain days is quite astounding. At the Easter feast there were fourteen hundred brought in, and paid for at the rate of eight for a farthing. The gardens yield leeks, onions, garlic, and pot-herbs, besides the peas and beans. The salted greens consisted of some variety of the cabbage tribe. We trace no lettuces. Apples are once mentioned. Of pears and cherries, which were certainly then grown in England, we have no notice. The monks of Wardon, in Bedfordshire, were famous for the baking-pear, which gives a name to the Wardon-pie, "so often named in old descriptions of feasts, and which so many of our historical novelists have represented as huge pasties of venison, or other meat, suited to the digestive capacities of gigantic wardens of feudal days." * Gooseberries were not unknown at that period; but strawberries and raspberries were not then cultivated in gardens. In the bishop's household there was no gardener included. It may be doubted whether there was any special cultivation of flowers; but we can easily imagine that some one of his bailiffs would have the rose and the gilly-flower about his cottage, with "the fresh perwinke" of Chaucer (the periwinkle), and the wall-flower. We have no mention of bees; and once only, in his travels, does the bishop taste metheglin, or mead. But he had a vineyard at Ledbury, the produce of which yielded, in the autumn of 1289, seven casks of white wine, and one of verjuice.

The bishop of Hereford went far from home in that year to purchase an estate—to Womenswould in Kent. There was a house there which required repairs, and additions had to be made. We have already indicated the very limited accommodation which even the manor-houses afforded; and so

* "Domestic Architecture," p. 138.

readers may unwillingly believe that the clerks and squires of a bishop, or the knights who surrounded a great baron, slept upon rushes on the floor of a great hall; yet the fact is indisputable. There is very little doubt that there was only one principal private chamber, even in some royal houses; and the indiscriminate use of the hall, as a sleeping apartment, "supplied themes for the ribald songs and tales of the earliest itinerant minstrels and romancers." * The private chamber, if of large dimensions, was sometimes divided by wooden partitions; but that dormitories were provided for guests and servants is wholly disproved by examination of the remains of houses of this period, and by the documents which detail the apartments of which a house was to consist. The lodge built for Edward I. at Woolmer, in Hampshire, comprised a hall, a large upper chamber, two wardrobes, and a chapel. The kitchen was always separate. Immediately the purchase of Womenswould was concluded, the trusty steward, Thomas de la Dene, plants an orchard of apple-trees, and sets about building and repairing in a manner which may give us some notion of the handicraft operations of those times. Workmen are about the place at Chrsitmas, building a chapel and a kitchen. There are sawyers cutting out timber; masons raising up walls of the "Kentish rag;" carpenters, putting up timber frame-work, nailing floors, and making fences out of old casks; plasterers, filling up the interstices of the walls, and rendering the whole smooth and tight within; thatchers, who use a great deal of straw for the roof; and labourers not a few, carting sand and fetching water. There was probably no well at hand, with its

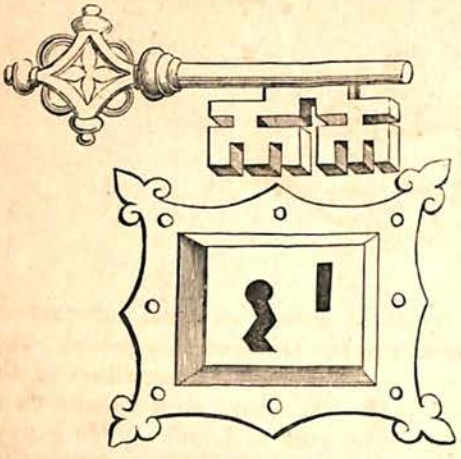




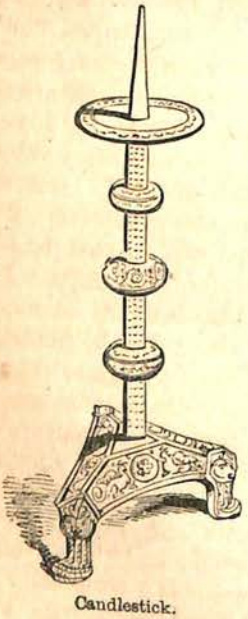
Library Chair, Reading Table, and Reading Desk.

* "Domestic Architecture," p. 17.

windlass and bucket, then constructed as at this day. The editor of the Roll thinks the workmen were "nursing the job," which is not improbable. Be that as it may, the artisans were treated with consideration; for they attended the service of the parish church, and took their proper independent position amongst the congregation, by contributing at the offertory certain small sums, with which they were provided by their employer for Christmas day. The payments for materials and labour are not separated in the accounts. Mr. Turner says that the daily pay of carpenters, masons, and tylers, was threepence with keep, and fourpence half-penny without. We rarely find any mention of bricks at this period. Lead was used for gutters, but it was not sold in sheets. Plumbers melted it on the spot where it was employed. In the same way the greater part of the rough furniture of the period was made on the spot by the carpenter—the tables and tressles, and benches of the hall; the chest and bedstead of the private chamber. There were chairs of state and reading-desks, such as we find represented in old manuscripts; but these were for the highest dignitaries. The smith's work was done also upon the spot. Nails and locks were obtained from the towns; and most probably the ornamental hinges, whose bars went across the panels for strength and ornament. But the rough iron-work, such as window-bars, was fashioned at the ambulatory forge. The iron-candlestick, with a spike to stick the candle on, was to be bought in towns, of which Gloucester was the chief for iron goods. A lump of wood, with a nail at the top, often served the same use. Ornamental candlesticks of silver were to be found in kings' palaces. The age of which we are treating, which has left us some of the noblest examples of ecclesiastical architecture, was very little advanced in the construction of elegant or even comfortable houses. It was a transition period, from the embattled fortress to the hospitable hall; and by the end of another century, when the conveniences of life came to be regarded as much as the security of possession, and property was more diffused amongst the general community, the yeoman was not satisfied that the roof of his cottage should let in the rain; that his settle by day should be his bed by night; and that his brass pot and trivet should be his only cooking



Lock and Key of Dover Castle.



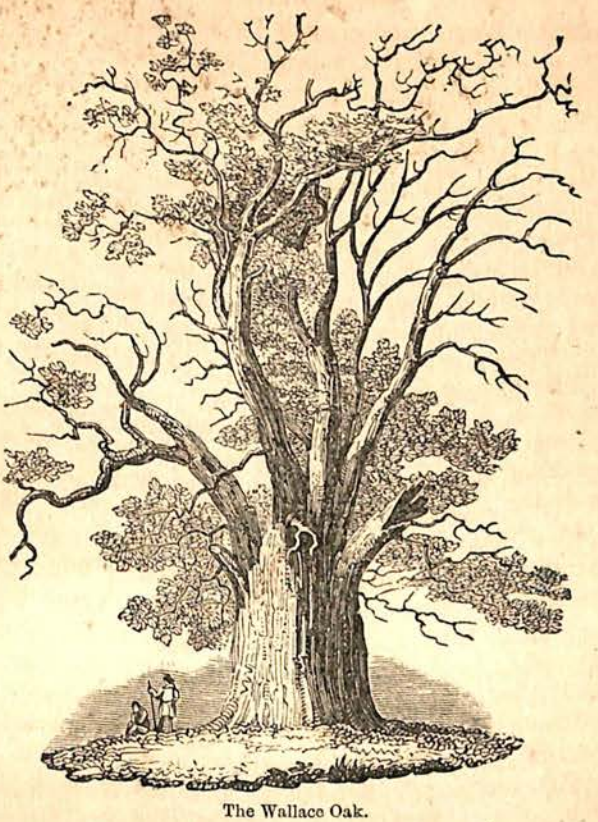
Candlestick.

utensils. Then came the time when the thrifty housewife had her linen sheets, and her handsome counterpane; and the bellows, such as we use to this day, woke up her smouldering fire, whilst the infant was hushed in its cradle by the chimney nook.

The Household Roll of Bishop Swinfield affords us some information, though not very abundant, of what relates to the Dress of this period. But what it tells is of more value in its relation to the general condition of the people, than the wardrobe accounts of kings. We have seen Thomas de la Dane buying cloth and furs during his winter visit to London. He bought four pieces of coarse cloth, called Keyneth, at a high price, these costing 19*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* There was no difference in the dresses of the bishop and his clerks, one piece being apportioned to the lord's use. They were made up into long garments by a tailor, who received with the cloth the necessary materials of lining, binding, and thread. The bishop's brother, who was a layman, wore a short cloak. The squires and bailiffs had four pieces and six yards of striped cloth bought for them, which cost 14*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* The serving-men had three pieces and four yards of an inferior striped cloth, costing 7*l.* 11*s.* 10*d.* The grooms and pages had a still commoner sort, of which four pieces and a half cost 8*l.* 15*s.* 9*d.* Here is an expenditure for cloth, amounting to more than fifty pounds, equal, according to the lowest calculation, to seven hundred and fifty pounds of our present money value; and to a thousand pounds, at the rate we have previously adopted. But the furs, which chiefly marked the rank of the wearer, were also expensive. The bishop had a winter surtout of deer-skin, and a furred cap, so that he was well protected in his cold journeys amidst the Herefordshire hills. For official costume, his hoods were of minever, and his mantles were trimmed with the same costly material. The chaplains had also valuable fur-trimmings; and the squires and lay-clerks were distinguished by lambs' skins. The skins of foxes, which were taken in the chase, were dressed for use in this careful household. It was necessary to be provident in all matters of dress, for the expenditure for clothing was very large. There were summer cloths to be bought, which arrived at Whitsuntide. They were of lighter texture, though woollen, and were denominated bluett and russet. The bishop and his clerks had still the same quality of stuff; and the servants were again distinguished by their striped dresses. There was a peculiarity in the cloth of that period. The nap was very long; and when the garment was a little shabby, the nap was re-shorn. The same sort of woollen cloth was worn by male and female, as the ordinary dress. The woollen manufacture of England was, at this period, well established. Totness was the great clothing town of the western district, Beverley of the northern, and Lincoln

of the midland. Linen, fine enough for the bishop's rochets, was bought at Aylsham, in Norfolk. But a large portion of the wool of England was exchanged for foreign manufactures; and cloths, woollen and linen, were imported from France, Flanders, and Spain. Southampton was the great port for Bordeaux wine, though Bristol, as we have seen, stocked the cellars of the bishop of Hereford. The silks of Italy, the cottons and spices of India, the refined sugars of Alexandria, found their way to London and Southampton chiefly through the Low Countries. The Italians had become the great mercantile capitalists of England, now that the Jews were driven out, and conducted the banking transactions with foreign countries, by arranging for remittances. They were also money-lenders at home; and we see Jacob de Brabason, of Sienna, coming to Bosbury, with two grooms and a page, to transact a little business with our good bishop.

The picture of domestic life which we have thus attempted to present, might have been extended in some minute particulars; but we are desirous, whilst we consider the manners of a people as an essential part of history, not to intrude too largely upon its higher, though not exclusive, vocation, of tracing the great events, of delineating the prominent characters, and of following the gradual development of law and government, from period to period.



The Wallace Oak.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Death of Margaret of Scotland—Statute of the Confirmation of the Charters—Claimants for the Scottish Crown—Conferences near Norham Castle—Claims of king Edward to feudal superiority—John Balliol king of Scotland—English Invasion of Scotland, 1296—Balliol resigns the Crown—William Wallace—Insurrection of 1297—Battle of Falkirk—Warfare prolonged by Wallace—Demands of the Pope—Parliament of Lincoln—Siege of Stirling—Capture and execution of Wallace—Robert Bruce slays Comyn—He is crowned king—The feast of the Swans—Death of Edward I.

During the absence of Edward I. from England, from 1286 to 1289, the public events of the kingdom were not of great importance. There was an insurrection of the Welsh, in 1287, which was subdued by the king's justiciary; and the English people suffered greatly from the rapacity of judges, sheriffs, and other officers. Much of the plunder which they had extracted from the king's subjects the king compelled them to disgorge, in the form of fines to himself. It is not recorded that he made compensation to those whom his rapacious satellites had defrauded. Whilst Edward was in Gascony, Alexander III., king of Scotland, had died. He had married Edward's sister, who, some years before, had died, leaving two sons, and a daughter, Margaret, who married Eric, king of Norway. The two sons of Alexander of Scotland died young; and Margaret, his grandchild, was the heir-apparent to the

Scottish throne. Her right had been solemnly acknowledged in 1284, at Scone. In 1290, Edward I. successfully negotiated a marriage for his son, Edward Prince of Wales, with this young heiress of the Scottish crown. The maid of Norway, as she was called, set sail for England, but the voyage was too exhausting. She was compelled to land on one of the Orkney islands; and there died, in October of that year. Had this marriage been accomplished, it is not improbable that some of the fierce national contests and the terrible border-feuds of three centuries might have been spared. There were no distinctions of race and language, at the end of the thirteenth century, to have prevented that more intimate union of the two countries which would have resulted from such an alliance as that contemplated by the politic king of England. The great nobles of each nation were essentially of the same Norman blood. Some had possessions in both countries. The strong national feeling of the Scotch was carefully provided for in this treaty of marriage, by which it was declared that the laws and liberties of Scotland should be inviolably observed, and that the kingdom should remain free and without subjection. But, nevertheless, Edward introduced a clause, saving to himself the rights which existed before the date of the treaty, by which clause he strove to maintain his claim to feudal superiority. Still, a gradual course of friendly intercommunication might have produced, even under the feudal system, a real union between countries so essentially connected by nature and social interests. An attempt was made to effect that union by sudden conquest; and the attempt alienated England and Scotland for many generations. The perfect amalgamation of the two countries was the work of four centuries. Institutions effected what despotic power could not accomplish. But the long fight of Scotland for national independence had the consequence of making the alliance of the two kingdoms more complete and enduring when it was ultimately perfected. The Englishman who now reads of the deeds of Wallace and Bruce, or hears the stirring words of one of the noblest lyrics of any tongue, feels that the call to "lay the proud usurpers low" is one which stirs his blood as much as that of the born Scotsman,—for the small distinctions of locality have vanished, and the great universal sympathies for the brave and the oppressed stay not to ask whether the battle for freedom was fought on the banks of the Thames or of the Forth. The mightiest schemes of despotism speedily perish. The union of nations is accomplished only by a slow but secure establishment of mutual interests and equal rights.

King Edward had past his fiftieth year when the third great struggle of his life was coming on. He was in the prime of youthful manhood when he won the battle of Evesham. He was past the middle term of his days when he subjected Wales to his dominion. His war against the independence of Scotland endured till he sank under its fatigues and anxieties, an aged man. But at every stage of his existence he was a prince of indomitable energy; with an ambition, not ill regulated, but aspiring to great ends by courses which we now think cruel and unjust. Hateful as some of his acts seem, they were in accordance with the spirit of his age. Possessing the strong will which distinguished so many of the Norman kings, he had a constant desire to exercise it in endeavouring to rule in England by prerogative rather than by law. But he had always the good sense to yield at the proper

moment, when that will was resisted by a power as strong as his own,—that of the parliament, which now, to some extent, spoke the voice of the commonalty, as well as that of the aristocracy and the church. The designs of the king upon Scotland, maturing at the time when he had disputes with Philip of France, could not be carried through without the imposition of heavy taxes. Edward had several times endeavoured to escape from the obligations of the Charters, and had refused to confirm them, such confirmation at that period being thought necessary to their validity. It was in 1297, when the Scots were in arms against the claims of the king of England, that his subjects exacted from him the Statute of the Confirmation of the Charters. This famous law went, however, much further than the previous charters, in placing the liberties of the country upon a solid foundation. The king's prerogative of levying tallage from his towns and tenants in demesne had not been adequately resisted. He had imposed a large duty on the export of wool, the great produce of the land. The growers of the country and the merchants of the ports were alike interested in setting limits to this power. It could no longer be exercised after the passing of this statute but "by the common assent of the realm." * There were two eminent men at that time who fought this great battle of the constitution—Humphrey Bohun, earl of Hereford and Essex, and Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk. These men were, to the age of Edward I., what John Hampden was to the age of Charles I. When these sturdy patriots called upon the sheriffs to levy no more taxes till the Charters were confirmed without any insidious reservation of the rights of the crown, the Plantagenet, imperious and bold as he was, felt that it was true wisdom to yield. The Stuart perished upon the scaffold, because he would never yield in his own cause, which he thought the only "good cause." There was a time when the exactions of Edward upon the church and the laity were very nearly exciting another civil war, such as he had witnessed under De Montfort. He was stripping the clergy of their possessions; he was not only taxing wool and hides at an unprecedented rate, but seizing merchandise and agricultural produce without present payment, in the most wanton exercise of purveyance. Bohun and Bigod then openly resisted the king's commands that they should sail with a reinforcement of troops to his army in Gascony. The king assembled the clergy and the people at Westminster. He lamented that he had been compelled to impose heavy burthens upon them, for the sole purpose of protecting them against the Welsh, the Scots, and the French, who sought *his* crown whilst they thirsted for *their* blood. The king sailed for Flanders. The barons then rose in arms, but they strictly preserved the peace of the kingdom. The young prince Edward was surrounded by a council; and by their advice the famous Statute of the Confirmation of the Charters was agreed to, and sent to the king abroad. From that day, the 10th October, 1297, the sole right of raising supplies has been invested in the people. But this most salutary power, which is the greatest of the many distinctions between a limited and a despotic monarchy, would never have been obtained if the king had not been encompassed with present difficulties and apprehended future danger. The parliament demanded his signature to their Act by the 6th of December. The Scots had obtained a great victory at Stirling; Edward was

* The statute "De non tallagio concedendo" is a sort of summary of the same enacting clauses in the "Confirmatio Chartarum."

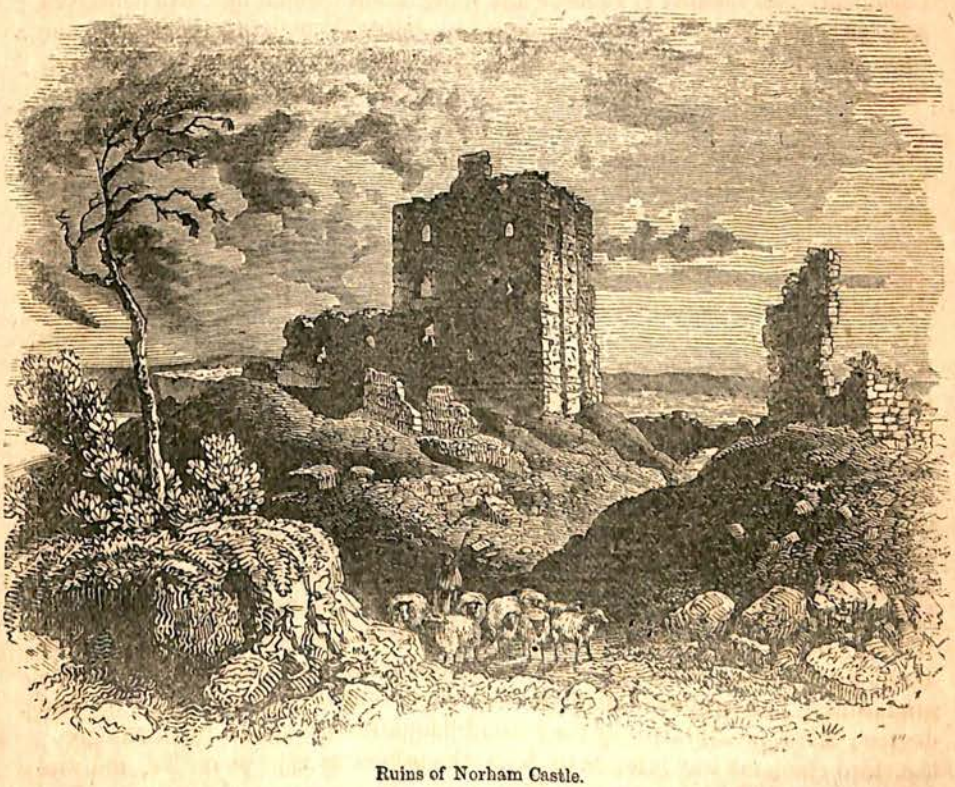
opposed in Flanders by a superior force of the French king. On the 5th of November, at Ghent, he signed the Act which was never reversed, although he often struggled hard to violate it. The resistance of Scotland to oppression had thus a powerful influence upon the liberties of England. The Letters Patent of the king, which accompanied the Confirmation of the Charters, granting a full pardon to Humphrey de Bohun, Roger Bigod, and others, "for certain disobediences," and "certain alliances and assemblies of armed people, made against our will and prohibition," show how strong a necessity existed that Edward should set aside, as he expressly does in this remarkable document, "all manner of rancour and indignation" which he "had conceived against them." * With these connecting observations, let us proceed in the narrative of that great contest which commenced at Norham in 1291, when king Edward claimed to be "sovereign lord of the land of Scotland."

The danger which was impending upon Scotland, through the unexpected death of Margaret of Norway, is strongly expressed in a letter from the bishop of St. Andrew's to king Edward. The prelate says, that there has gone forth a mournful rumour that their lady is dead; that the kingdom is consequently disturbed, and the community divided; that civil war and great slaughter will ensue unless the king devises a remedy. Robert de Brus and John de Balliol are mentioned in this letter, and De Brus is pointed at as one whose determinations are doubtful.† When the rumour was confirmed, there arose abundant competitors for the crown of Scotland. Thirteen of these claimants appeared; but the pretensions of ten of the number were so frivolous, that the old historians of Scotland have made it a charge against Edward that he listened to their claims merely to embarrass the proceedings, with reference to the three who had real grounds for their demands. These three were the descendants of David, earl of Huntingdon, the brother of William, king of Scotland, the predecessor of Alexander II. and of Alexander III., whose direct line was extinct by the death of the young Margaret. David had three daughters. From the first daughter was descended John Balliol, David's great-grandson; from the second daughter Robert Bruce, David's grandson; from the third daughter, John Hastings, David's great-grandson. The representative of the elder daughter was remote by one degree; the representative of the second daughter was nearer by one degree; the third claimant was inferior to both the others as representative, and was inferior to one in his remoteness of degree. In a matter so clear, according to our recognised law of descents, it seems difficult to imagine how the claim of Balliol could have been disputed. But the question was complicated by the pretensions of Hastings, who held that the kingdom was partible amongst the descendants of the three daughters of David, earl of Huntingdon. The states of Scotland referred the decision to Edward, king of England.

On the 10th of May, 1291, a solemn assembly was held near Norham in Northumberland. Edward came with many of his nobles, according to a summons issued on the 16th of April, to meet him there "with horses and arms and all the service they owed." ‡ There was a calm deliberation in the

* Statutes of the Realm, vol. i. p. 124.
† The letter, in Latin, is given in "Fœdera," new edit., vol. i. part ii. p. 741.
‡ *Ibid.* p. 753.

king's proceedings which sufficiently shows that his course was regulated by the most settled policy. From the 10th of May to the 13th of June there were ten solemn conferences, the particulars of which are recorded by a notary, Master John de Cadamus, with all the precision of a modern protocol.* These conferences, as the notary informs us, were held in a green meadow, under the sky, opposite the castle of Norham, on the Scotch bank of the river of Tweed. The poet of chivalry has painted "Norham's castled steep" of another period; but "the battled towers" never looked



Ruins of Norham Castle.

upon a more important scene than when the barons and prelates of Scotland met in that green meadow—with the Tweed "broad and deep" sparkling in the summer sun, and "Cheviot's mountains lone" closing-in the distance—to hear Edward of England, by his chancellor, demand their recognition of his superiority and dominion over them.

At the first meeting of the 10th of May, Roger de Brabançon, chief-justice of England, addressed the assembly in the French language, setting forth that Edward, king of England, was come, as superior and direct lord, to do justice to the claimants to the crown of Scotland; but that he first required the assent of the states to his own claim to superiority and direct dominion. The answer was postponed till the next day; and then a further adjournment of the meeting was required. On the 2nd of June, Robert

* Fœdera, vol. i. part ii. p. 762

Burnel, bishop of Bath and Wells, and chancellor of England, made a long harangue, also in French, in which he stated that no answer having been given to the king's demand that his superiority should be acknowledged, he should ask Robert Bruce, lord of Annandale, whether he was willing to receive judgment from the king of England, as sovereign and direct lord of Scotland; to which Robert Bruce answered that he did so acknowledge the king of England, and, as such, he was ready to submit to his decision. The same question was put to each of the other candidates present, and the same answer was given. John Balliol was not in attendance, but he subsequently gave in the same acknowledgment. In another assembly, king Edward stated that he did not exclude himself from any claim to the kingdom of Scotland by hereditary right. Finally, a solemn instrument of the recognition was drawn up and signed; and commissioners were appointed from both nations to assist in taking evidence as to the claims to the crown. In these proceedings it is difficult to regard the pretensions of Edward to be the feudal lord of Scotland as a new claim arising out of his own tyrannous and unscrupulous nature. The kings of Scotland, from the earliest times, had done homage to the English sovereigns, either in their character of Scottish monarchs, or as holders of fiefs in England. The precise nature of that homage has now become a mere antiquarian problem. It was debated at one time with all the fury of national partisanship. The Scottish nobles, who so readily admitted the claims of Edward, looked at this question with a more intimate knowledge of the nice limits between feudal submission and national independence than we can possess. They were not the less patriots because they acknowledged the right of Edward, as superior lord, to decide who should fill their vacant throne. When the question of right was resolved into one of might, by the king of England going beyond the just boundaries of his feudal claims, they nobly asserted the independence of their country. As duke of Gascony, Edward himself was a vassal of the crown of France; and had acknowledged the French king's claims to superiority, with great reluctance. We have repeatedly seen how the kings of England were in arms against their feudal superior; and how the independent dominion of territory after territory had been surrendered by them. What Edward had submitted to he was, of all men, the most likely to enforce. When, after a long course of deliberation, the commissioners had reported in favour of John Balliol, and the king of England had confirmed the decision, he resigned the castles which had been put into his hands pending the inquiry. But he required Balliol to do homage to him as his "liege man for Scotland," saying "which kingdom I hold, and ought of right, and claim to hold by inheritance, for myself and my heirs, kings of Scotland, of you and your heirs, kings of England." Had Balliol not made this submission he would have violated the solemn act done in the green meadow opposite Norham Castle. The whole question assumed a different character when the theory of feudal submission was attempted to be converted into a practical enforcement of humiliating services.

Edward was not slow in the application of his notions of what constituted "faith and loyalty" in a royal vassal of Scotland. It may probably be attributed as much to the anomalies of the feudal system as to the individual character of the man, that we find Edward, in 1293, summoning Balliol to his court at Westminster to answer to charges of mal-administration, and

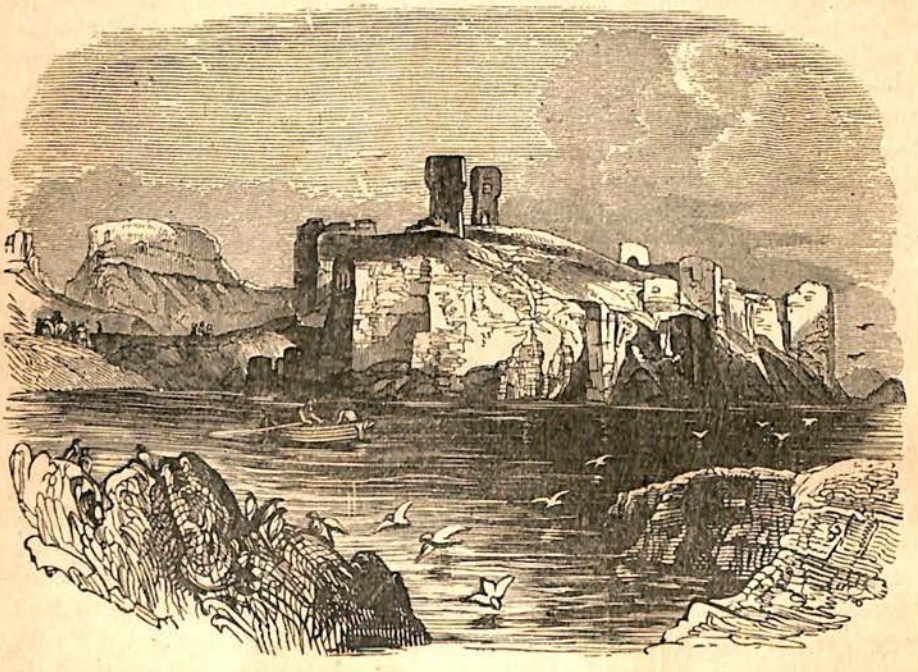
refusing himself, in 1294, to appear at the court of the king of France, to answer for the alleged misconduct of some of the people of Gascony. Balliol goes to Westminster, and is treated with some indignity. Edward refuses to go to Paris, and his fiefs in France are declared forfeited. A war ensues. Edward renounces his fealty to France, and raises a large army to assert his independence. The Welsh take the opportunity of rising; but they are defeated when Edward postpones his French expedition to put himself at the head of his troops in Wales. The revolt was very serious, and the king himself was besieged in Conway Castle, and reduced to the extremest necessity. His gallant bearing in sharing the last flagon of wine with his few brave men is recorded by the chronicler, Henry Knyghton. Conway was at last relieved; and Edward pursued his stern career of punishing revolters and building castles. At last, having subdued the Welsh, he began to make his dominion felt in Scotland. The Scottish barons now understood what the feudal submission of their king really implied; and they incited Balliol to assert the independence of their country. He resigned the conduct of the war which was impending to twelve guardians of the realm; and a secret treaty was concluded between Scotland and France. In 1296, Edward was on his march to Scotland. The great question was to be brought to issue by a stronger instrument than that of a citation to Westminster.

According to writs which were sent out in December, 1295, a large force assembled at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 1st of March, 1296. There is a very curious narrative of this invasion of Scotland, written by a contemporary, which, however brief the details, presents an authentic chronicle of those events of twenty-one weeks which so materially affected the future of the two kingdoms.* On the 28th of March king Edward crossed the Tweed, with five thousand horsemen and thirty thousand foot. On the 30th he "took the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed by force of arms, without tarrying." This little phrase, "by force of arms," means that this important place—a free port whose customs amounted to a fourth of those of all England—a commercial emporium, full of the wealth which belongs to a large interchange with foreign countries—that this second Alexandria, as it was termed, was taken by assault; its inhabitants, to the number of many thousands, massacred; and the whole place given up to pillage.† The king and his host remained there a month, "every man in the house that he had gotten." Many of the Scotch nobles, amongst others, Robert Bruce, sided with Edward. Whilst the king was at Berwick, a messenger arrived with a letter from Balliol, renouncing his fealty, and refusing to obey the summons of Edward to appear before him. "The felon fool," exclaimed the king, "since he will not come to us we will go to him." Whilst at Berwick, the king dispatched a portion of his army to Dunbar, which was in the hands of the Scottish forces. A great battle ensued between the English and Scotch, in which Sir Patrick Graham and ten thousand men were slain. Edward himself arrived at the castle, which was

* "The Voyage of King Edward into Scotland," with observations by Sir N. H. Nicolas. "Archæologia," vol. xxi.

† Hemingford, a chronicler who died in 1347, is the authority for this statement. The narrative in the Archæologia says nothing of the slaughter.

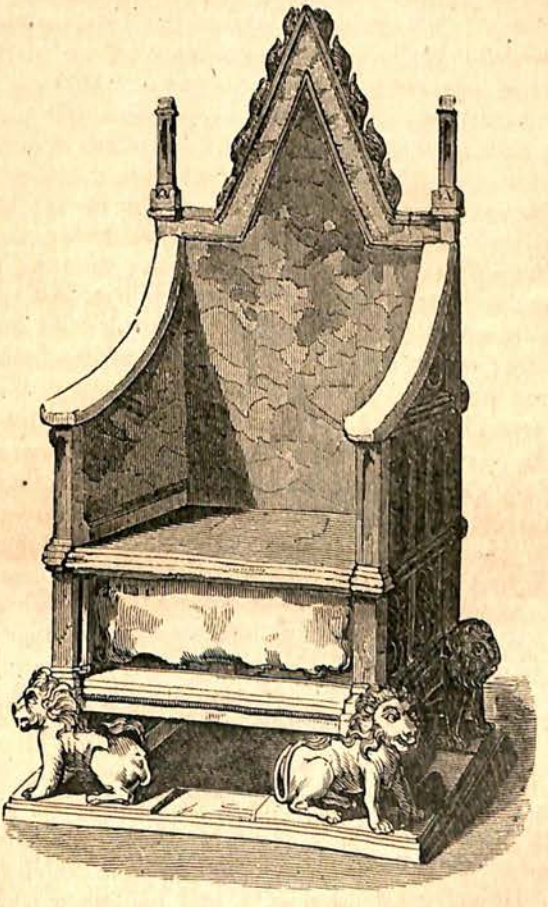
surrendered on the 29th of April. Onward went the "ruthless king," capturing Roxburgh Castle, on his way to Edinburgh, where he arrived on the 6th of June. He immediately commenced a siege of the castle, "having caused there to be set up three engines casting into the castle day and night." The siege was not finished on the eighth day, when the king went forward, leaving "the engines casting still before the castle." On the 14th of June



Ruins of the Castle of Dunbar.

Stirling surrendered without resistance, the garrison having "run away, and left none but the porter, which did render the keys." The king proceeded to Montrose, which he reached on the 7th of July, where he remained till the 10th; "and there came to him king John of Scotland to his mercy, and did render quietly the realm of Scotland, as he that had done amiss." Fordun, the Scottish historian, describes the ceremony as one in which the humiliated monarch, putting off his royal ornaments, and holding a white rod in his hand, resigned, with his crown and sceptre, all the right he had, or might have, in the kingdom of Scotland, into the hands of the king of England. This important act having been accomplished, Edward proceeded to Aberdeen, "a fair castle and a good town on the sea." He probably went farther north, as far as Elgin. Before he returned, he sent the bishop of Durham, and other of the military leaders, "to search the country;" and he himself went into desolate places, such as Interkeratche,—"where there was no more than three houses in a row between two mountains." It is unnecessary to trace the victor's course southward. He returned to Berwick, having "conquered and searched the kingdom of Scotland, as is aforesaid, in twenty-one weeks without any more." At Berwick the king of England held a parliament, and

there he received the homage of the bishops, barons, and knights of Scotland. He appointed John Warenne, earl of Surrey, regent of the subjected kingdom; and moved on to London, with the crown and sceptre which John Balliol had surrendered, and with the sacred stone, "the stone of destiny," on which the Scottish kings were seated at their inauguration. Castles, hostages, regalia were the king of England's. But the heart of the people was not his. The conquest was not accomplished.



Coronation Chair. Beneath the seat is the "Stone of Destiny."

Towards the end of the fifteenth century there was living a Scotch minstrel, whom John Major, the historian, saw when he was a boy. This minstrel was Blind Harry, whose spirited poem on the deeds of William Wallace contains some portions of authentic history intermixed with much fable. The Scotch poet, blind from his birth, collected many of the legendary tales which the more ancient minstrels used to recite in hall and castle; and as the stirring theme for several centuries was the independence of Scotland, the favourite hero was the man who had excited a national resistance to the English power, when the whole country was apparently prostrate at the feet of the

First Edward. William Wallace was essentially the hero of the people. There was scarcely a Scottish noble who had not sworn fealty to the English king, and exhorted his countrymen to submission. One man, not of noble birth, was hiding in the mountains with a few followers; and out of the partisan warfare which he carried on was engendered the spirit which finally made Scotland free. The early life of William Wallace belongs to legend rather than to history. At the time that Balliol surrendered his crown to Edward, Wallace is supposed to have been about twenty-five years of age. He is said to have been the younger of two sons of Sir Malcolm Wallace of Ellerslie, and his paternal residence was in the neighbourhood of Paisley. The youthful deeds of Wallace, as reflected in tradition, mark him from the first as a hater of oppression. He is fishing in the river of Irvine, near Ayr, and some English soldiers attempt to seize his well-filled basket. He kills one of the rude warriors with the butt-end of his fishing-rod, and puts the others to flight. Another tradition is that he slew the son of the English governor of Dundee, who had offered him some insult. A third legend connects his patriotic career with an outrage upon his dearest affections. Walking with his wife in the town of Lanark, an Englishman ridicules his gay garments, and a quarrel ensues, which ends in the death of the man who insulted Scotland in Wallace's person. He flies to a wild bushy glen called the Cartland-crags; and there hears that his house has been burnt, and his wife and children put to death, by the ferocious English governor. He collects a band around him; and descending upon the town of Ayr fearfully revenges an act of treachery committed by another English governor. The fame of his exploits goes through the land. Nobles flock to the standard of the obscure man; and Wallace, the outlaw, became the commander of a great army. He was joined by Sir William Douglas, Sir John Graham, and ultimately by Robert Bruce, the grandson of the Bruce who competed with Balliol for the crown. A general revolt against the English authority broke out in the spring of 1297. Edward was in Gascony. But two powerful armies were formed in Scotland; and that on the western coast, under Henry Lord Percy, and Sir Robert Clifford, came in presence of the Scots near Irvine. The high-born who had joined Wallace when danger was afar off, deserted him when the army of England was in their front. Bruce, and Douglas, and other nobles, agreed to acknowledge Edward as their sovereign lord. Sir William Wallace,—for he then bore the title which belongs to knighthood—and Sir Andrew Moray, with a considerable body of adherents, retired to the north. The national spirit soon gave him the means of compensating for the desertion of the proud nobles, who dreaded the loss of their estates. Wallace had only honour to lose. But the tenants of many of the Scottish chiefs were secretly encouraged to join the insurgents. After various successes, Wallace met the English army near the town of Stirling. His position was on the north side of the Forth. The English approached the river on the southern bank. Warenne, the guardian of the kingdom appointed by Edward, offered pardon to Wallace and his followers if they would lay down their arms. The offer was indignantly rejected. The English, on the morning of the 10th September, began to cross the river by a narrow bridge; and when a portion of the army, horse and foot, had passed, Wallace poured down from the hills upon the separated force, and nearly all the English on the

north bank perished by the sword or in the stream. The treasurer of Edward, Cressingham, was one of the slain. The chief loss on the side of the Scotch was Sir Andrew Moray. Warenne retreated rapidly into England. Every place of strength was abandoned; and Wallace, with the son of Moray, at the head of the army, which they proclaimed to be that of John, king of Scotland, crossed the Tweed, and, for several weeks, made fearful ravages upon Northumberland and Cumberland. It was at this moment that the English barons obtained the Confirmation of the Charters. The Scottish army penetrated as far south as Newcastle. At Hexham, on the 7th of November, a protection of the prior and convent of that place was granted by Andrew Moray and William Wallace, commanders-in-chief of the army of Scotland, in the name of king John, and by consent of the community of the said kingdom. John Balliol was then in the Tower of London. This Andrew Moray was a worthy successor of the friend of Wallace, who fell at the battle of Stirling-bridge. Just before this invasion of England, a letter was addressed in the names of Moray and Wallace to the authorities of Lubeck and Hamburg, stating that their merchants should now have free access to all the ports of the kingdom of Scotland, seeing that the kingdom, by the favour of God, had been recovered from the power of the English. After his return from the invasion of England, we find that, in 1298, as appears in a charter, dated on the 29th of March, "William Walleys, miles," is styled "Custos regni Scotiæ,"—he is guardian of the kingdom in the name of king John.

The elevation which Wallace had now attained was not of long endurance. The nobles said, "We will not have this man to rule over us." When Edward, having hurried from France, was once again in Scotland, which he entered in the June of 1298, the attachment of the humbler classes of the people was not powerful enough to sustain the great popular leader in his triumphant course. The nobles kept aloof. He had a numerous army of enthusiastic followers; but these partisans were chiefly on foot. The knightly horsemen were hiding from the wrath of the English king. Edward came on with his mailed chivalry and his terrible bowmen. At Falkirk, the unequal forces met. The king, now in his sixtieth year, had lost nothing of his youthful energy, or of that personal courage which especially marked the great leader in the times when it was the business of a commander to possess the sturdy arm as well as the directing head. Advancing to this field of Falkirk, Edward was thrown from his horse, and broke two of his ribs. Regardless of the injury, he led his cavalry forward to meet the whole Scottish army, standing in close array. Wallace knew that the only safety was in the most desperate resistance; and he said to his men, "I have brought you to the ring, now let me see how you can dance." Matthew of Westminster, who is full of fury against the Scottish leader—which appears to have been excited by the atrocities which his followers committed in the north of England—tells this anecdote, adding—"and so fled himself from the battle, leaving his people to be slain by the sword." Wallace was not a man to fly. He fought in that field of Falkirk, in which his spearmen long stood up against the English knights, till his friends, Stewart and Graham, and thousands who have left no name, had fallen. All was finished. Wallace, according to tradition, hid himself in an oak in the adjoining forest, of which Sir Walter Scott saw the roots when he was a boy. There is another

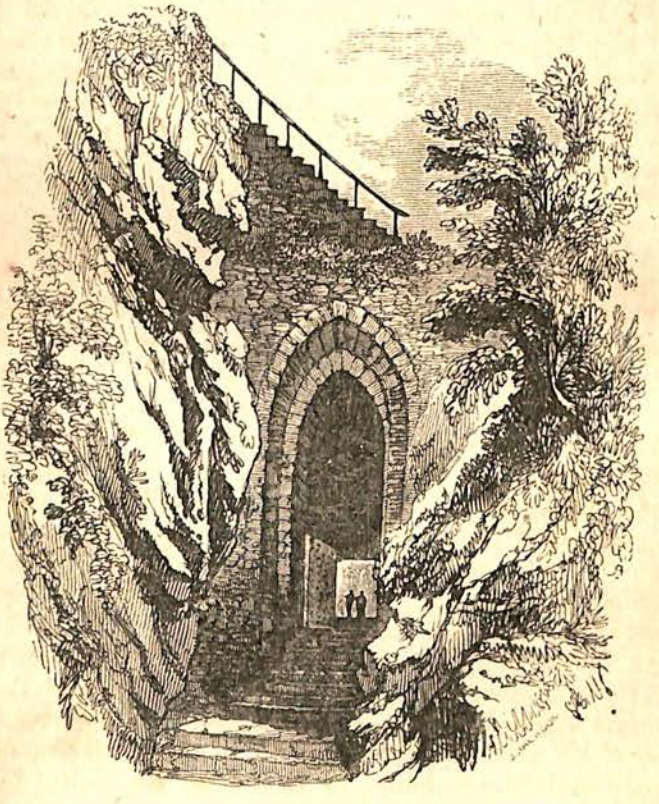
Wallace Oak near Paisley, which is connected with the early life of the hero, whose adventures are still associated with many a glen and woody covert. For seven years after the fatal battle of Falkirk, we hear little of Sir William Wallace. He was deprived of his office of guardian of the kingdom. The war was continued; but Bruce, and Comyn, and the bishop of St. Andrews, were joint guardians, in the name of Balliol. Wallace carried on his former system of desultory warfare, which had first roused a general resistance to Edward. Legendary history tells of his mighty deeds; and, though the poetical spirit may exaggerate his physical prowess and his loftiness of heart, Wallace was still animating his countrymen to a resistance, of which he did not witness the triumph, but of which his example set forth the first great sustaining principle. That the career of Wallace was one of patriotism, in the loftiest sense of the word, may be doubted; nor was it upheld by those high social considerations by which the opposition to injustice becomes a great moral effort, as in the instance of Washington. It was probably excited originally by the hatred that belongs to race. Wallace was a native of the old kingdom of Strath-Clyde, where the British language and British traditions lingered through many generations; and the spirit that inspired "the land of Wales," and which all the changes of modern civilisation cannot wholly eradicate, was probably the source of much of Wallace's resistance to the Anglo-Norman rule. To dress him up in the fanciful garb of pure heroism, as romance, and even history, have attempted to do, is to falsify the character of his age. He was cruel, as all men of that time were cruel. He shrunk not from private slaughter, or general massacre, as few did in the days when ferocity appeared to be an ingredient of courage. The great vindicator of Scottish independence who came after him commenced his career with a murder. Edward the king, though politically lenient and merciful, coolly ordered many butcheries in open warfare, and sanctioned many atrocious revenges upon those who resisted his domination. We must judge all such men with impartiality. We must not exalt them into patterns of virtue, or degrade them into monsters of brutality. The system under which they were born and lived made their actions a perpetual struggle for ill-defined power. Their contemporaries were not in a condition to view these actions through a just medium. In the eyes of the monk of Westminster, William Wallace was "a robber, a sacrilegious man, an incendiary, and a homicide." Posterity has set aside all this prejudice. But the opinion of modern times has not surrendered itself to the belief that the spirit which animated king Edward and his English in their dealings with Wales and Scotland was that of unmitigated tyranny and mere hatred of freedom. There was sound statesmanship in those days, which knew that a small country, physically united as Britain is, could not be safe or prosperous under a divided government. The mistake of that policy was the usual one of endeavouring to anticipate the natural processes of union, by the disturbing influences of conquest.

Whilst Wallace was carrying on his desultory warfare, the new regents followed up a measure which the previous government had originated, in appealing to the interference of the pope to protect Scotland from the aggressions of the English king. The envoys of Bruce and Comyn demanded this interference upon the ground that Scotland was a realm which belonged of

right to the see of Rome. In June, 1299, the pope, Boniface, set forward this pretension in a letter addressed to Edward, and demanded that every controversy between England and Scotland should be referred to the decision of the pontiff. The delivery of the letter was delayed for more than a year; and upon its arrival Edward returned for answer that he should submit the matter to his parliament. On the 20th of January, 1301, a parliament was accordingly assembled at Lincoln. The sagacity of the king was never more strikingly exemplified than in this proceeding. In the first burst of his passion he vowed that if he heard more of these inordinate pretensions he would exterminate the Scots from sea to sea. The independence of England was threatened in these papal proceedings; and Edward wisely called together the representatives of the nation to speak the nation's voice. To this parliament of Lincoln there came upwards of three hundred persons—prelates, abbots, barons, knights, and burgesses. The pope received an answer which was worthy of a great representative assembly. He was told that "it is, and by the grace of God shall always be, our common and unanimous resolve, that with respect to the rights of his kingdom of Scotland, or other his temporal rights, our aforesaid lord the king shall not plead before you, nor submit in any manner to your judgment, nor suffer his right to be brought into question by any inquiry, nor send agents or procurators for that purpose to your court." The English representatives, whether or not they thought their king had just claims as regarded Scotland, showed a spirit which would not brook that insolent assumption of temporal power which the popes had so often attempted to exercise. It is impossible not to respect those bishops and abbots who spurned the pretensions of their spiritual head as boldly as knight or baron or sturdy tradesman. We note the burgesses as tradesmen; for in that parliament sat Stephen Stanham, a merchant of Lincoln, who dealt in sugar and figs and herrings and stockfish, in company with two archbishops, eighteen bishops, and eighty-nine knights and barons.* The pontiff was not in a condition to visit Edward and his parliament with any ecclesiastical penalties. There arose a controversy, in which the king traced back the superiority of his predecessors over Scotland to the days of Brute, the Trojan; and the Scottish envoy replied that they cared not for Brute or his institutions, for they were sprung from Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh. The quarrel, as far as the pope was concerned, evaporated in these learned researches. Edward, in the meantime, had concluded a truce with Scotland, which lasted for ten months of the year 1302. He had been negotiating a peace with France, but a demand was made that Scotland should be included. To this demand the English assent was refused, and the war was renewed at the beginning of 1303. Stirling Castle was taken by the Scots; and the English army was defeated at Roslin. Edward had now made peace with France, and obtained the restoration of Gascony. He was thus ready to carry his personal vigour to the Scottish war. He soon enforced an unwilling submission; and concluded a treaty with Comyn, and the other leaders, on the 9th of February, 1304. Wallace was not included in the capitulation; but it was said that he might, if he pleased, give himself up to the king's will and grace. He was

* See Article on "The Parliaments of Lincoln," in "Proceedings of the Archæological Institute," 1848.

afterwards summoned to appear before a parliament of nobles of the two nations; but he continued contumacious, and was pronounced an outlaw. The reduction of Scotland was completed in the summer of that year, by the surrender of Stirling. Edward himself conducted the memorable siege of this important castle. Sir John Oliphant defended the fortress for three months, with a garrison of only a hundred and forty men. The king in the first month had exhausted his stores of warlike missiles, and had to command his English sheriffs to buy up and send him fresh supplies of cross-bows and quarrels. Famine at last compelled a capitulation. There were women in that devoted castle who shared the sufferings of their husbands and brothers. At length the gates were opened, and a sad procession of Oliphant and



Gate betwixt the upper and lower parts of Dunbarton Castle.

twenty-five of his men was moving down the hill of Stirling, each barefoot and with a halter round his neck, to kneel before the king. Edward, say some, turned aside to wipe the tears from his eyes, and granted their lives.

Wallace, the most constant of the leaders who had fought in this great war of independence, was at length taken prisoner near Glasgow. He was conducted to Dunbarton Castle; and as the noble outlaw mounted the rocky stair which led to his dungeon, he must have felt that nothing was left for him but to die bravely as he had lived. His two-handed sword was hung up

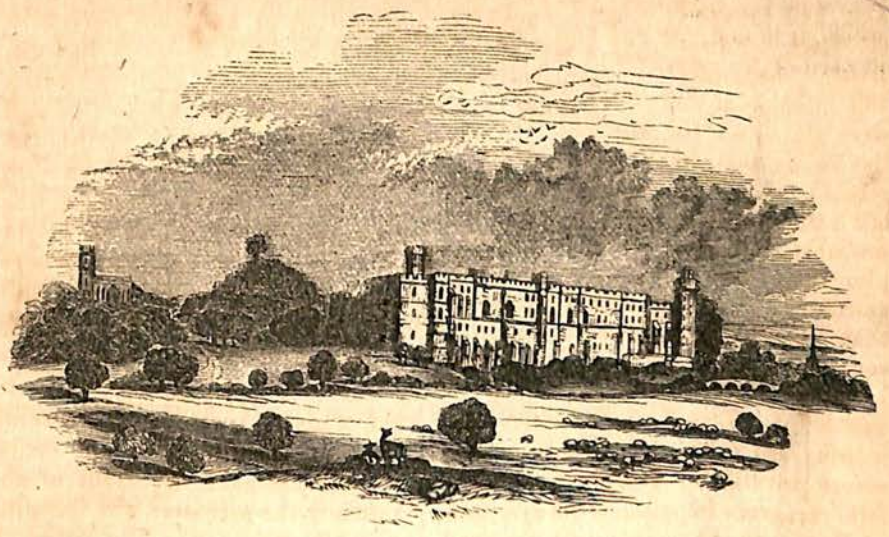
in the keep of Dunbartor, never again to be drawn against tyrannous Anglo-Norman or treacherous Scot. An attempt has been made to disprove the tradition that he was betrayed by Sir John Menteith, who was governor of Dunbarton under Edward; but a document has been discovered by which it appears that various large sums were given to persons who had watched Wallace and assisted in his capture, and that land to the value of one hundred pounds was assigned to Menteith.* Strongly fettered, he was hurried on the road to the south on the 5th of August, 1305. On the 22nd he arrived in London, and was lodged in the house of a citizen, William de Leyse, in Fenchurch-street. On the next day he was conducted on horseback to Westminster Hall, surrounded by the mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen. The undaunted man, crowned with a garland of oak, as a king of outlaws, was arraigned as a traitor to the English crown. "Traitor I could never be, for I was not a subject of king Edward," was his reply. His execution was determined on before this mock-trial. Sentence of death was pronounced against him. He was dragged at the tails of horses through the streets to a gallows standing at the Elms at Smithfield. The horrible barbarities of an execution for treason having been gone through, his head was struck off, and placed upon a pole on London-bridge. His body was divided into four quarters. William Wallace, thus betrayed and outraged, was never so dangerous to the power of King Edward as when his mutilated arms and legs were exhibited to the Scottish people on the public places of Newcastle, Berwick, Perth, and Aberdeen. Sir Simon Fraser, one of the brave adherents of Wallace, was also executed in the same year, and his head was placed on London-bridge beside that of his great leader. There was exultation in London over the fate of these brave men. There was wailing in Scotland; but the lament was smothered in a passionate desire for revenge. In four months Robert Bruce was in arms.

John Balliol, the king John of Scotland, was dead. His son was in captivity in London; and the name of Balliol was held in scorn. Robert Bruce, the grandson of the competitor for the crown, was now twenty-three years of age. He had vacillated between submission to Edward and adherence to the cause of independence. Scotland had been apparently settled by the pacific policy of Edward; and young Bruce appeared to be in his confidence. John Comyn, the son of Balliol's sister, was an object of jealousy to the King of England, for he in some degree represented the rights of the Balliol family, with a boldness which might have been dangerous. Bruce came to Scotland. In the choir of the church of the Minorites, in Dumfries, Bruce and Comyn met in private conference. According to Fordun, the ancient feud between the two families was the cause of the fatal result which ensued from this meeting. Bruce plunged his dagger into the breast of Comyn, and hurried out of the church. The attendants of Bruce completed the murder. The guilt of blood was upon Bruce; and the old Scottish historians have surrounded the mysterious transaction with alleged circumstances of treachery on the part of Comyn, calculated to remove some portion of the odium from the memory of their great patriot. It was an age when human life was held at a cheap rate; and the violation of a sacred place by murder was considered a greater crime than the murder itself. But the deed, whether rash or premeditated, admitted of no hesitating policy. Bruce immediately assumed the title of

* "Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland." Palgrave.

king, and he was crowned as king Robert of Scotland, at Scone, on the 27th of March. Edward was now failing in health; but at a solemn festival in London, he conferred the degree of knighthood on his son prince Edward, and on many of the young nobility; and at a great banquet, when two swans were placed on the table of the regal hall, the king swore, before God and the swans, that he would revenge the murder of Comyn, and punish the rebels who had thus defied him. Such were the vows of chivalry, which were often thus taken at the feast of the peacock. The feast of the two swans was probably held to be even more important than that of the bird of bright plumage. The prince departed with a large company of knights the next morning. The king, who, apprehensive of his approaching end, had begged that his body might remain unburied till his vow was accomplished by his son, slowly followed. Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, was in the neighbourhood of Perth, when the army of king Robert attacked him. The result was defeat. Bruce escaped with a small band of his followers; and for several months the fugitives wandered amidst the Grampian hills, sustaining many severe privations. During their leader's retreat the more important of his followers were imprisoned or executed. Amongst the prisoners was the wife of Bruce, to whom Edward assigned a suitable residence. The sister of Bruce, and the countess of Buchan who placed the crown on his head at Scone, were confined for several years at Berwick and Roxburgh. In the spring of 1307, king Robert came forth from his retreat. He was again joined by many adherents, and he obtained some successes over the earl of Pembroke and the earl of Gloucester. On the 3rd of July king Edward, with a large army, set out from Carlisle on horseback. His impatience to take the field against the insurgents would no longer endure the restraint which was demanded by his bodily weakness. The effort was fatal. Edward I. expired at Burgh-on-the-Sands, on the 7th of July.

From the Painted Chamber



Warwick, from Lodge Hill.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Edward of Caernarvon—His early conduct—Crowned—Piers Gaveston—His murder at Blacklow Hill—Robert Bruce in Scotland—His successes—Reconciliation of Edward and the Barons—Invasion of Scotland—Bannockburn—The Scots in Ireland—The Despensers—Insurrection of the Barons—Fall of Lancaster—Retreat of Edward from Scotland—Final truce—The Templars.

EDWARD of Caernarvon was twenty-three years old when his father died. His elder brother, Alphonso, died the year after Edward was born. His mother, Eleanor of Castile, died when this, her only surviving son, was seven years old. That excellent mother would probably have guided his course better than his stern father. The crosses which were erected on the road by which her funeral passed from Grantham to Westminster, preserved her memory for generations amongst the English, and called forth many a prayer for the repose of her soul. Edward probably forgot that memory in the wild excesses of his youth. Under the year 1300, Fabyan, the chronicler, writes—"This year, the king, for complaint that was brought unto him by master Walter Langton, bishop of Chester, of sir Edward, his eldest son, for that he, with Piers of Gaveston and other insolent persons, had broken the park of the said bishop, and riotously destroyed the game within it, he therefore imprisoned the said sir Edward, his son, with his accomplices." On a subsequent occasion, when the prince was in his twenty-first year, he had a quarrel with the same bishop; and the king then forbade him entering his house, and issued an order to the exchequer that sustenance should be denied to him and his followers. There is extant a penitential letter of the

prince on this occasion. There are many other letters of the young Edward, which, it is said, "evince his readiness of disposition to assist those who stood in need of his interference and bounty."* This kindliness of nature is not incompatible with his impulsive character—a combination of a weak understanding with a passionate will. He was not wanting in courage; for at seventeen he was leading a battalion against the Scots on the banks of the Irvine. In 1303 he was again with his father in Scotland. In 1306, as we have related, he preceded his father in the expedition against Bruce; and he then marked his course by such unsparing devastation, that the king, it is asserted, upbraided him with his cruelty. He had not the wisdom of his father to know that leniency is far more effective than terror, under many circumstances. At this crisis, the evil tendencies of the young Edward were manifesting themselves in the most offensive manner; for in February, 1307, at a parliament held at Lanercost, an order was issued that Piers Gaveston should be banished for ever from the kingdom, as a corruptor of the Prince of Wales. In five months he had the power, as king, of revoking the sentence of his sagacious father.

Charing Cross.

On the 8th of July, the nobles and others assembled at Carlisle recognised Edward as king, and there did homage. The death of Edward I. was unknown in London for more than a fortnight. The young king received homage from some Scottish nobles at Dumfries; and then led his army northward. But he suddenly halted at Cumnock, in Ayrshire. He had recalled Gaveston, who joined him in Scotland. The king departed for London, leaving Aymer de Valence guardian and lieutenant. Before the ensuing Christmas, the ministers of his father were deprived of their employments; Gaveston was loaded with wealth and honour; was married to Margaret, the king's niece; and was appointed regent of the kingdom, on the departure of Edward for France, to marry Isabella, the daughter of Philip le Bel, the French king. The marriage took place at Boulogne; and on the 24th of February, 1308, Edward was crowned at Westminster. All the old claims to precedence at the coronation of the kings of England were disregarded on this occasion; and the place of greatest honour—to carry the crown and walk before the king in procession—was given to Gaveston. In three days the offended nobles petitioned for the banishment of the favourite. The king referred the matter to a parliament to be holden after Easter; and this tribunal would hear of no compromise. Gaveston was sentenced to banishment, and was compelled to swear that he would never return. In another month it was learnt that the infatuated king had appointed him to the government of Ireland. The favourite appears to have conducted himself in this office with courage and ability. There can be no doubt that this Gascon had many chivalric accomplishments. At a tournament he unhorsed the four great English earls who were his bitterest

* Mr. Hartshorne. in "Archæological Journal," No. 27, p. 263.

enemies. He was tasteful amidst his prodigal magnificence. The king at length persuaded a party of the nobles to consent to Gaveston's recall; and the pope gave the favourite a dispensation from his oath to remain abroad. Then the court became a scene of perpetual banquetting. Gaveston was supreme; but the great barons looked on in sullen discontent and suppressed hatred. The day of vengeance would come, when Thomas of Lancaster would exact a terrible penalty for the nick-name which the upstart had bestowed upon him of "the old hog;" when the earl of Pembroke would remember that he had been called "Joseph the Jew;" and when the earl of Warwick, "the black dog of the wood," would make the sarcastic favourite "feel his teeth." On the 16th of March, the barons came in arms to a parliament at Westminster; and they enforced the appointment of a committee, under the name of ordainers, to provide for the better regulation of the king's household, and to remedy the grievances of the nation. The moving principle of this strong measure was a hatred of Gaveston. The ordainers sate in the capital. Edward went to Scotland, but met no enemy, for Bruce had retired beyond the Forth. The English king wintered at Berwick; and the next spring confided the conduct of the Scottish war to his favourite, who conducted himself with courage and prudence. Edward returned to London, to meet the ordainers, leaving Gaveston at the castle of Bamborough. In the articles of reform which were presented to the king, it was proposed that all grants which had been made by Edward, since he had issued the commission, should be revoked; that all future grants made without the consent of the baronage should be invalid; that purveyance, except what was ancient and lawful, should be punished as robbery; that new taxes should be abolished; that the great officers of the crown should be chosen by the advice and assent of parliament; and that parliaments should be held once in each year, and oftener, if needful. Then came a clause decreeing the banishment of Gaveston, for having given bad advice to the king, embezzled the public money, obtained blank charters with the royal seal affixed to them, formed a confederacy of men sworn to live and die with him, and estranged the affections of the king from his subjects. In vain the king struggled with the inexorable ordainers. In vain he protested that he would not consent to what was injurious to the just rights of the crown. Gaveston was exiled, and went to Flanders. In 1312, he was again in England; and the king published a proclamation, stating that the exiled man was a true and loyal subject, and returned in obedience to the royal

Effigy of Edward II.
Gloucester Cathedral.

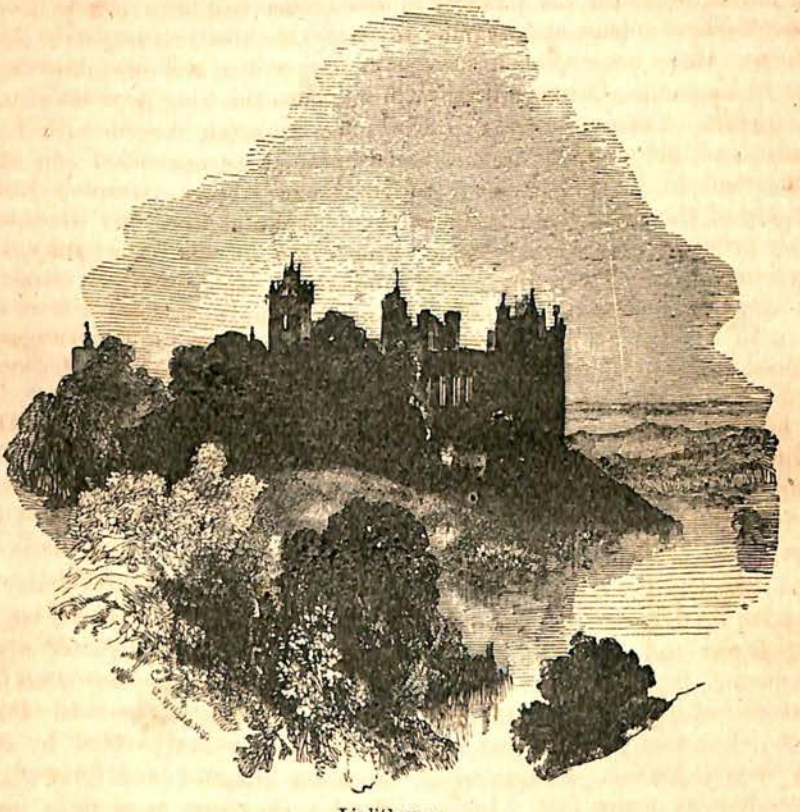
command. Thomas of Lancaster, the grandson of Henry III., was appointed leader of an association of barons who were ready to resort to force. They assembled a large body of knights at a tournament; and then marched to York, where the king had been joined by Gaveston. Onward they followed the flight of their sovereign to Newcastle; and thence to Scarborough, where Gaveston remained in the castle, whilst the king returned to York. The earls of Surrey and Pembroke besieged the castle; and Gaveston surrendered to the earl of Pembroke, under a pledge of safety for himself, which had been given to the king. From Scarborough, he was conducted by Pembroke to Dedington in Oxfordshire, the earl leaving him in the custody of his servants. Before the morning dawned the unfortunate favourite was awakened, and commanded to dress himself. At the gate of Dedington, he found himself in the presence of "the black dog of the wood"—the terrible earl of Warwick. He was placed on a mule, and, surrounded by a numerous force, was carried prisoner to Warwick. As he entered the walls of Guy's lofty tower he found himself in the presence of those haughty barons whom he had despised and insulted. His skill in the tournament, his courage in battle, his magnificent apparel, his jewelled rings, his high-sounding titles, his reliance upon the kingly power—all were worthless in this terrible moment. He stood before his enemies, and they sentenced him to die. Out of that grim fortress—now the most beautiful of castles, combining feudal strength with a more refined grandeur—was Gaveston led to execution. There was a march of a short distance before the cavalcade reached Blacklow-hill, a little knoll on the road near Guy's Cliff, where the judicial murder was to be accomplished. The spot is indicated by a monument not remarkable for elegance. The Avon glides beneath the hill. The towers of Warwick rise above the surrounding woods. The historical interest of the scene associates in striking contrast with its natural beauty. The age of law succeeded to the age of violence; and the change is well evidenced by the peacefulness and fertility which now surround this Blacklow-hill.

During the five years that the peace of England was disturbed by the wretched contest between the king and his barons, which ended in the first signal tragedy of this tragic reign, Robert Bruce was establishing his power in Scotland with a firmness and wisdom that was scarcely to be looked for after the rash murder in the church at Dumfries. But he had endured great adversity. Danger and suffering had taught him prudence and moderation. He had wandered in the Highlands with a few followers, subsisting upon the chance products of the chase. He had traversed the great lakes in leaky boats, sheltering from the storm in the fisher's hovel, and deriving lessons of patience and perseverance from noting the efforts of a spider to fix the first thread on which its web was to be woven. He had been hunted by blood-hounds; he had waded in rapid streams, to elude their scent; he had defied his enemies single-handed in the mountain-pass, and in the river-ford. The fugitive was now an acknowledged sovereign. In 1309 he was recognised as king by the most influential body of Scotland—the clergy,—at a general ecclesiastical council held at Dundee. In that year a truce was concluded between England and Scotland, which endured till August, 1310. The renewed war was for some time a succession of contests on the borders, in which exemption from plunder was purchased by the English lords-warden by

money payment. In 1312 Bruce besieged Perth, which was in the hands of king Edward's officers. The town was strongly fortified, and was surrounded by a moat. Bruce, in a dark night of October, led his men across the moat, in a manner which is graphically described, according to Barbour, by "a wight and hardy knight of France" who was in Bruce's service. This knight, "seeing the king first try the depth with his spear, and then pass with his ladder in his hand into the water, crossed himself in wonder, and exclaimed, 'Good Lord, what shall we now say of our carpet-companions in France, whose time is devoted to the stuffing their paunches with rich viands, to the dance, and the wine-cup, when so valiant and worthy a knight thus exposes himself to such imminent peril, to win a poor collection of huts.'" One after another, the strong places of Scotland were taken by Bruce. He then, encouraged no doubt by the fearful dissensions of England, crossed the Tweed, in 1312, with a large force; burnt the towns of Hexham and Corbrigg and part of the city of Durham, and penetrated as far as Chester. The terrible calamities of war were brought home to the wretched people of both countries. Whilst Bruce was ravaging Northumberland, some English leader or other was wasting Scotland. Famine always followed these devastations. The corn was trodden down in the fields, or burnt in the barns. The cottage and the grange in flames marked the progress of a fierce soldiery; and when a town was taken, plunder and massacre went hand in hand. To the Scots these invasions were easier than to the English, from the habits of the people. The forces of Edward came on in shining armour; the knights mounted on their heavy war-horses, and the archers and spearmen marching slowly under their cumbrous panoply. Froissart has graphically described the mode in which the countrymen of Bruce carried on their warfare. "These Scottish men are right hardy, and sore travelling in harness and in wars; for when they will enter into England, within a day and a night, they will drive their whole host twenty-four miles, for they are all a-horseback, without it be the traundells and laggers of the host, who follow after a-foot. The knights and squires are well horsed, and the common people and others, on little hacks and geldings; and they carry with them no carts, nor chariots, for the diversities of the mountains they must pass through in the country of Northumberland. They take with them no purveyance of bread nor wine; for their usage and soberness is such in time of war, that they will pass in the journey a great long time, with flesh half-sodden, without bread, and drink of the river water, without wine: and they neither care for pots nor pans, for they seethe beasts in their own skins. They are ever sure to find plenty of beasts in the country that they will pass through. Therefore they carry with them none other purveyance, but on their horse: between the saddle and the panel, they truss a broad plate of metal, and behind the saddle they will have a little sack full of oatmeal, to the intent that when they have eaten of the sodden flesh, then they lay this plate on the fire, and temper a little of the oatmeal; and when the plate is hot, they cast off the thin paste thereon, and so make a little cake in manner of a cracknel or biscuit, and that they eat to comfort withal their stomachs. Wherefore it is no great marvel, though they make greater journeys than other people do." *

* Froissart's Chronicles, Lord Berners' translation, chap. xvii.

The details of the sieges of the Scotch castles which the English had garrisoned have much of the interest of romance. "Subtlety and stratagem," to use the expression of Barbour the chronicler, often preceded the onslaught and the capture. So Roxburgh Castle was taken, and so Edinburgh. Linlithgow was won through the "subtlety and stratagem" of a peasant named Bennock, "a stout carle and a stour," who had been accustomed to supply the garrison with forage. He concealed soldiers under the hay with



Linlithgow.

which his waggon appeared to be loaded; passed the drawbridge, and, the gates being opened, placed his waggon so that they could not be closed. The concealed men attacked the garrison, and another band who had been in ambush rushed in and completed the work. But these successes were only preliminary to the great blow which was struck for the independence of Scotland.

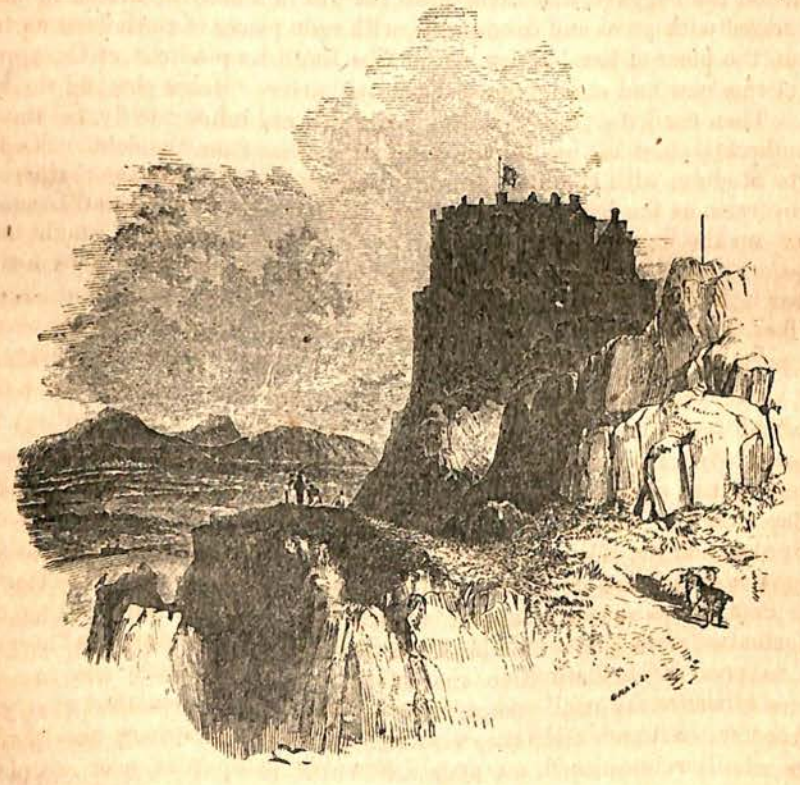
The king and the nobles of England were at last roused from their intestine quarrels to look at the danger which was gathering around them. It was no longer a war for the conquest of the country which had almost universally acknowledged Bruce as king; it was not a contest for mere feudal superiority. England was in danger. Her towns were burned; her fertile lands were devastated; her people were reduced to the most abject misery, wherever the Scot came with his little hackney, and his bag of oatmeal. At a parliament held on the 15th of October, 1313, king Edward

and his barons were in some degree reconciled; and it was "with one accord assented and agreed, that no one, of what state or condition soever he be, in time to come, be appealed or challenged by reason of the taking, detaining, or death of Piers de Gaveston." * At the same time an amnesty was granted to the adherents of Gaveston; and the property which was found in his possession was given up to the king. Nothing can more distinctly exhibit the infatuation of Edward than the inventory of this vast collection of plate and jewels, of which the treasury of the crown had been chiefly despoiled. Some of these golden and enamelled chains, buckles, crosses, cups, chaplets, coffers, girdles—set with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds—bore the arms of England. Others are recited as gifts to the king from his sister and his friends. There is a ring which Saint Dunstan forged with his own hands; and not even the more sacred relic of an enamelled cup of gold, bequeathed to Edward by his mother Eleanor, was exempted from the rapacity of the favourite. There are a hundred and ninety-six items of such costly property, to some of which a value is affixed. One great ruby, "which was found on Sir Peter de Gaveston when he was taken," is estimated at the worth of a thousand pounds. This extraordinary document is an acquittance to Thomas of Lancaster, Guy of Warwick, Henry Percy, and Robert Clifford, for the valuables of which they had taken possession when Gaveston's head fell under their axe.†

Edward Bruce, the brother of king Robert, had been besieging Stirling; and the English governor, Philip de Mowbray, agreed to surrender the castle if not relieved by the 24th of June, the feast of St. John the Baptist. King Edward summoned the military tenants of the English crown to meet him at Berwick on the 11th of June; and levies of foot soldiers were made in the northern counties and in Wales. Those from Wales and the Welsh marches were required by the king because he wanted men able to drive an enemy from forest and mountain, and from marshy places, of difficult access to horsemen. On the 16th of June, only a week before the day fixed for the surrender of Stirling, Edward marched from Berwick, at the head of a great army. The numbers of that army were greatly exaggerated by the old chroniclers, Fordun estimating it at three hundred and forty thousand horse, and as many foot. Later historians are more reasonable, and are contented with a hundred thousand, of which forty thousand were cavalry. This vast force arrived in the neighbourhood of Stirling on the eve of St. John. The country through which they marched would afford insufficient support and accommodation for such a multitude; and they were accompanied with a vast train of provision-waggons, and of carriages and horses laden with tents and pavilions. Bruce was encamped in an extensive forest lying between Falkirk and Stirling, known as the Torwood; and here, on the 22nd of June, it was learnt that the English force had reached Edinburgh on the 21st. The Scottish army, therefore, moved into the neighbourhood of Stirling. Bruce knew that the first object being the relief of that castle, according to the treaty, he might therefore take up a position without uncertainty as to the movements of his enemy. Mr. Tytler has described the position of Bruce from a personal survey of the field of battle, in 1830.‡ The extreme

* Statutes of the Realm, vol. i. p. 169. † See Fœdera, vol ii. part i. p. 203.
‡ "Lives of Scottish Worthies," vol. ii. p. 25.

left of his army rested upon elevated ground above St. Ninians, and extended through an undulating tract of country called the New Park, the right resting on a stream called the Bannock. The centre was partially defended by a morass, part of which still remains. On the left, on a line which the English would have to cross, Bruce caused pits to be dug, in which were inserted pointed stakes, covered slightly over with turf and rushes. He had need of every precaution for strengthening his position, for his force was greatly inferior to that of the English. It chiefly consisted of infantry. His determination was to fight on foot, and to meet the charges of the cavalry with his battle-axes and spears. A few horsemen were with him. On the night of St. John the advanced guard of the English cavalry approached Stirling, with the intention of attacking the Scots in the rear. Bruce's army had



Stirling.

fasted from a religious principle. "Thar dynit none of them that day," says the rhyming chronicler. A partial engagement took place, in which king Robert exposed himself as became the daring knight rather than the cautious general. His leaders, however they were rejoiced to see him cleave the skull of Henry de Bohun in single combat, remonstrated with him on his temerity. He only held up the broken shaft of his battle-axe, and expressed his regret for the loss of his good weapon. At day-break of the 24th of June, the great host of the English was in view, with bright shields and burnished helmets, embroidered banners and gaudy surcoats, glittering in the morning sun. The Scotch host heard mass, and the abbot of Inchaffray preceded them with a

crucifix as they formed on the field of battle. When they knelt again in prayer, some of the English said, "they beg for mercy." "Deceive not yourselves," said one who knew the people, "it is God only they supplicate, and not you." On came the English archers and infantry, and the conflict was long and desperate. Bruce had a reserve which attacked his enemy in flank. The English knights came on, with the earl of Gloucester, the nephew of the king, at their head. He fell covered with wounds. The horses stumbled in the pits which Bruce had dug. There was confusion in the ranks; and the few Scottish horse which were in the field were led by Sir Robert Keith to a victorious struggle. All the camp-followers of Bruce's army had been stationed apart, behind a small hill, still known by the name of Gillieshill (the servants' hill). There were soldiers, no doubt, mixed with them, for they suddenly abandoned the baggage, and came down the hill in a body of fifteen thousand men, armed with pikes and oxen-goads, with rude pieces of cloth fixed on tent-poles in the place of heraldic banners. The English squadrons, at the appearance of this new and strange army, began to waver. Bruce charged the main body. Then ensued a general rout. King Edward refused to fly, till the earl of Pembroke seized his bridle-rein, and hurried him from the field. The king rode to Stirling, with the intention of throwing himself into the castle; but the governor, as the battle was lost, knew that he was bound in all honour to deliver up the castle according to his obligation, and Edward sought other refuge. The band of horsemen fled on, and never stopped till they reached Dunbar. The spoil which remained to the victors was enormous. Fordun describes the herds of cattle, the droves of sheep and hogs, the loads of corn with portable mills, the casks of wine, the military engines—trebuchets and mangonels. The slaughter of the English exceeded ten thousand. The Scots lost about four thousand.* Numbers of English and Welsh fugitives were scattered over the country—the knights detained for ransom; the humble footmen put to death by the Scottish peasantry. Stirling was surrendered the day after the battle. In exchange for some of his English prisoners, Bruce obtained the release of his wife, sister, and daughter,—of the bishop of Glasgow and the earl of Marr. Thus complete was the great victory that made Scotland a nation; which enabled her, gradually approaching to an amalgamation with England in laws and institutions, in customs and literature, long to preserve a distinctive character; and which, when she names the "Bruce of Bannockburn," wakes up many other sacred memories of struggles for freedom, civil and religious, without which memories, long cherished and never wholly relinquished, no people, however prosperous, ever escaped the yoke of foreign or domestic tyranny.

Fabyan records that, after many days, there was a song sung by the minstrels of Scotland which said:—

> "Maidens of England, sore may ye mourn,
> For your lemans ye have lost at Bannockbourn."

The maidens, and all the people of England, had many other losses to deplore through these Scotch wars. In 1314, there was a deficient harvest. The price of corn became enormous, and the parliament, with the ignorance of economical

* It is the fashion of Scotch historians greatly to exaggerate these numbers, as if the importance of the victory depended upon the amount of bloodshed.

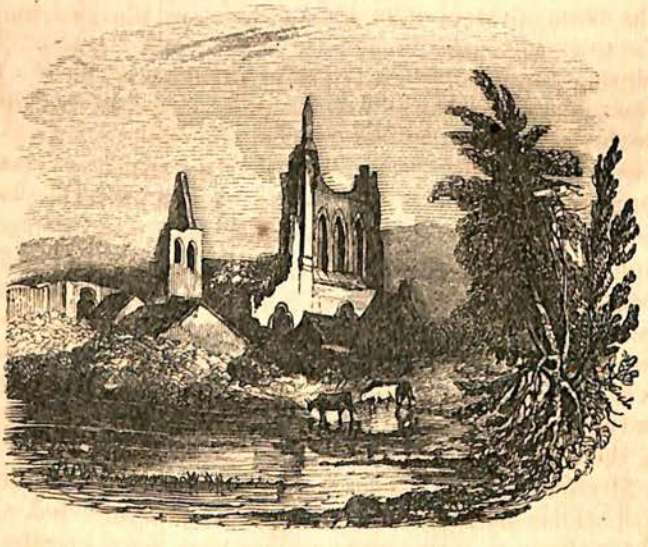
laws which was not in any degree confined to those times, fixed a maximum on the price of provisions. The next season was more disastrous. There was a murrain amongst the cattle, and a general pestilence amongst the starving people. The brewing of beer from grain was suspended. The nobles expelled from their castles the hungry retainers for whom they could find no food; and the country, necessarily, swarmed with plunderers. The "ordinances" which had been agreed to before the fall of Gaveston, were resisted by the king, whilst their enforcement was demanded by the barons. In this horrible condition of famine, pestilence, and anarchy was the unhappy kingdom, when the Scots came, again and again, to plunder and destroy. There was no public spirit in the people or their leaders to resist. A war was going on in Ireland between the English and the Scots. Edward Bruce had landed at Carrickfergus, in 1315, to drive the English settlers from the island, in concert with the native chiefs. After various conflicts he was crowned king of Ireland, in 1316; and he reigned some time in Ulster. The Welsh were again in insurrection, and formed an alliance with Edward Bruce. Robert, the king of Scotland, had gone over to Ireland to aid his brother. During his absence the war in Scotland had been renewed by the English. But Robert Bruce returned to the land of his triumphs, in 1318; and he succeeded in capturing Berwick. The Scots, marching into Yorkshire, burned many towns, and had nearly taken Edward prisoner on one occasion, and his queen on another. An attempt was made to retake Berwick; but it was unsuccessful. At length, in 1320, a truce for two years was concluded "between Edward, king of England, and Sir Robert de Brus, for himself and his adherents." The Irish invasion had been previously terminated in 1318, by the death of Edward Bruce; who was defeated in a battle near Dundalk, and fell on the field with two thousand of his countrymen. But no success and no truce could put an end to the intestine troubles of England. Another favourite had arisen; and another war with the barons was impending.

Many of the important facts in the history of our country are written in its statutes. In three acts of parliament of the 15th of Edward II., we find the distinct traces of a revolution, and of a counter-revolution. In the first of these statutes, that decreeing "The exile of Hugh le Despenser, father and son," we learn that at a parliament held at York in the twelfth year of Edward, Sir Hugh, the son, was named and assented to be in the office of chamberlain of the king. This young man was of high family. His grandfather was killed on the side of the barons at Evesham. His father had served in the wars of Edward I., both in France and Scotland. Edward II. was lavish in his bounties to his chamberlain. He united him in marriage with a daughter of that earl of Gloucester who was killed at Bannockburn, by which marriage he became possessed of the greater portion of Glamorganshire. His material wealth, according to a parliamentary document, was enormous. He had flocks of ten thousand sheep; herds of a thousand oxen and cows; hundreds of pigs; arms and armour for two hundred men. The possessions of the father were more than double those of his son. The young Despenser soon became embroiled with his neighbours, the lords of the marches; who, assembling in arms, attacked his castles, and destroyed or carried off his property. The earl of Hereford, the king's brother-in-law, one of the peers appointed to enforce the "ordinances," encouraged this violence;

and the earl of Lancaster, the cousin of the king, joined with him and the lords of the marches and other barons and knights, in an indenture binding them in a common cause against the power and influence of the Despensers. They marched to London, and on their way plundered the manors of the elder Spenser, as they had those of his son. From St. Alban's they sent a message to the king, demanding the banishment of these objects of their hatred; which demand Edward refused with indignation. The confederates advanced to London, where the parliament was sitting; and then was passed the statute of exile of Hugh le Despenser, father and son, "to the honour of God and holy Church, and of our lord the king, and for the profit of him and his realm, and for maintaining peace and quiet among his people." The offences with which the Despensers were charged are then minutely set forth. They had accroached to themselves royal power over the king and his ministers; they desired to lead the king to act with violence against his will; they kept the king from showing himself to his people, or giving audience to his great men, except at their will and humour; they removed good and sufficient ministers, and appointed false and evil ministers, and unlearned justices; they excited to civil war; they caused the king to impose unreasonable fines; they permitted no bishop or abbot, newly created, to approach the king, till they had paid fines to Sir Hugh, the son. Upon these various grounds, the peers of the realm award that Hugh, the father, and Hugh, the son, shall be disherited for ever, and utterly exiled out of the realm, as enemies of the king and his people.

In this parliament, which was held at Westminster in three weeks after Midsummer, in 1321, indemnity was granted against all men, of whatsoever state or condition, who had done what might be noted for trespasses and against the king's peace "in pursuing and destroying Hugh le Despenser, the son, and Hugh le Despenser, the father." In a parliament held at York, in three weeks after Easter, in 1322, this statute of indemnity was repealed, it being shown that "it was sinfully and wrongfully made and granted," and that the assent "of the prelates, earls, barons, knights of shires, and commonalty," assembled in 1321, "was given for dread of the great force which the earl of Hereford and the other great confederates suddenly brought to the parliament of Westminster, with horse and arms, in affray and abasement of all the people." In the same parliament of York, the exile of the Despensers was annulled. This was a mighty change to be wrought in eight months. During that short period there had been a counter-revolution. In the October of 1321, king Edward took up arms, ostensibly to revenge an affront offered to his queen; and after capturing Leeds castle, in Kent,—to which his queen had been denied admission—led his forces northward. It was alleged that before the truce of 1319, the earl of Lancaster had been in traitorous correspondence with the Scots; and that through his complicity with Robert Bruce, Berwick had not been recovered by the English. The truce of two years was now about to expire. The Despensers had returned to England; and Lancaster now kept no terms in his opposition to the government of Edward. There can be no doubt that at this period he and the earl of Hereford were in alliance with Bruce. The Scots army was to enter England, to aid the earls and their confederates in their quarrel, but on no account to lay claim to any conquest; and the earls were to use their

endeavours that Bruce should enjoy his kingdom in peace. As Edward advanced, Lancaster retired into Yorkshire. At Boroughbridge he was encountered by a strong force, under the governors of York and Carlisle, and here Hereford was killed. Lancaster expected the arrival of his allies from Scotland, but no army came. He was taken prisoner, and was conducted to his own castle of Pontefract, at whose gates he had stood when Edward passed by in returning from the siege of Berwick, and jeered his king with bitter scorn. To that castle Edward now came a triumphant lord; and in his own hall was Lancaster, who at Warwick had adjudged Gaveston to die, arraigned as a traitor. On a gray pony, without a bridle, he was led to execution; and kneeling down on an eminence outside the town his head was struck of. Eighteen others of the confederates were executed in London and other places. Thus it was, that the parliament of York, in 1322, passed the statute which we have mentioned. But they did more than this. They revoked all the "ordinances" which had been made ten years before, it being found "that by the matters so ordained the royal power of our lord the king was restrained on divers things, contrary to what it ought to be." But not



Byland Abbey.

only these "ordinances" were repealed, but all provisions "made by subjects against the royal power of the ancestors of our lord the king" were to cease and lose their effect for ever. Edward II. was now in the plenary possession of sovereign power. He had an obsequious parliament. The great barons who interfered with his will were removed. Hugh Despenser, the son, might reign supreme in the palace, as he had reigned before. Edward would himself wipe out the disgrace of Bannockburn, and win back Scotland to his crown. He addressed a letter to the pope, stating that having put down the earl of Lancaster, he was engaged in preparing to invade Scotland, desiring no peace between the two kingdoms.

The Scots, anticipating the coming war, entered England, and penetrated to Lancashire. They then returned without molestation, laden with immense

booty, and driving their waggons bearing the spoil of gold and plate, of furniture and church ornaments, as securely as if they were on a peaceful journey. The king of England was collecting a great army—a machine too cumbrous for effective use. He marched into Scotland, with an ill-supply of bread for his men and of provender for his horses; for England was still suffering the miseries of scarcity. As the great host of Edward marched on to the Forth, he found a desert. The stores of corn, the herds of the Lothians, had all been removed northward. The houses were deserted. The English fleet, which had been prepared to co-operate with the invading army, was detained by contrary winds. Famine and sickness were doing the work which Bruce waited to complete. King Edward hastily marched back to the border; and king Robert came forth from his encampment at Culross, in Fifeshire. Douglas began to harass the English in their rear; and Edward, appointing guardians of the marches, retreated to a strong position near Byland abbey, in Yorkshire. The greater part of his army was disbanded. Edward felt himself secure. But a body of Scottish knights suddenly appeared before the abbey, and obtaining a victory, the king of England fled precipitately to York. The war of twenty-three years with Scotland was at an end. On the 30th of May, 1323, a truce between the two kingdoms was concluded for thirteen years.

It was during the revolutionary period of which we have been treating that the great military order of the Templars was dissolved, after having attained the highest authority and influence in Europe during nearly two hundred years. One of the charges against the Despensers was, that they prevented justice being done, touching the lands of the Templars. When Philip le Bel, king of France, in 1307, suddenly took possession of the palace of the Temple in Paris, and threw the Grand Master and all his knights into prison, the main object of this despotic act was to obtain possession of the enormous properties of the order throughout France. The total ruin of the body, so illustrious for their deeds of arms, so obnoxious for their pride and luxury, was soon accomplished throughout Europe, under the sanction of the spiritual head of the Church. In France, during three years of the most atrocious persecution, the Grand Master, Jacques de Molai, perished at the burning stake, with fifty-four of his knights. Torture had extracted from some of these men frightful confessions, which they afterwards retracted. In England, although the order was suppressed, no cruelties were exercised upon the members of the brotherhood, which had numbered some of the most illustrious of the nobles amongst its knights. In 1308, under sealed directions sent to all the sheriffs in England and Ireland, about two hundred and fifty knights were arrested, and all their property was attached. Before a tribunal of prelates and envoys of the pope, forty-seven of these knights boldly maintained their innocence. The use of torture was urged upon the king, in a letter from the holy pontiff; and the archbishop of York, having ascertained that torture was unknown in England, and that there was no machine for torture in the kingdom, inquired if he should send abroad for such an instrument. None, as it appears, were put upon the rack, or burned. They were imprisoned; and had a daily pittance allowed for their support. Meanwhile, the Hospitallers, or Knights of St. John, who had maintained their influence in the East, and continued to make a show of defending Christendom

against the Mahomedans, kept their large possessions without molestation, and in their great priory of Saint John, in Clerkenwell, maintained as much state as the Templars on the bank of the Thames. At last came the grand question of the revenues of the Templars. After sixteen years, during which the king, and his favourites, and his nobles, partook of the spoil, a statute was passed, in 1324, which recited that the order of the Templars having been dissolved, the lands and tenements in demesne were seized into the hands of the king and of divers other lords of the fees of them; but that now, as the Order of the Brethren of Saint John of Jerusalem is provided, instituted,

St. John's Hospital. From Hollar.

and canonised, for the defence of Christians, the lands and all appurtenances should go to that order, to be employed, as the Templars were bound to employ them, in relieving the poor, in hospitalities, in celebrating divine service, and in defence of the Holy Land. England escaped the guilt of France, in abolishing this powerful body without bloodshed. The knights of Saint John held their wealth in England till, two centuries later, their order was suppressed by one before whom lord-priors melted away in the common ruin of monastic institutions. In the reign of Edward III. the students of law took possession of the great house of the Templars in London; and their preceptories, in the rural districts, fell into decay, or became the homesteads and barns of the descendants of the Saxon villans whom the proud Norman knights had despised and trampled upon.

Froissart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mortimer and Isabella in France, with Prince Edward—They return in Arms—Fall and Death of the Despensers — Edward II. deposed — Edward III. proclaimed King — Murder of Edward II.—Invasion of the Scots—First Campaign of Edward III.—Seizure and Execution of Mortimer—Evil Times of Edward II.—Transition state of Feudal relations—Sir John Froissart—Chivalry—Military spirit of the reign of Edward III.—Edward Balliol and the Scotch War—Claim of Edward to the French Crown—Naval Victory of Sluys —James Artevelde—Jane de Montfort—Edward lands in Normandy.

ONE of the principal supporters of the earl of Lancaster, who was beheaded at Pontefract in 1322, was Roger Mortimer, lord of Wigmore. He was spared the extreme penalties of treason, but was confined in the Tower of London. In 1323 he escaped, and proceeded to France. Isabella, the queen of Edward II., was sister to Charles IV. of France; and to reconcile some differences between Edward and Charles in the affairs of Gascony, Isabella was deputed to the court of her brother, with power to conclude a treaty. This she accomplished, upon terms not very advantageous to her husband, in May 1325. In September of the same year, the king of England was induced to transfer his foreign possessions of Gascony and Ponthieu, to his son Edward, then thirteen years of age; who went to Paris, and there did homage for them to the feudal lord. Charles IV. At Paris, Roger Mortimer joined the queen, and

became the chief officer of her household. The return of Isabella and her son to England, as soon as the homage was performed, was expected by Edward. But they came not. After the lapse of more than five centuries, the private remonstrances of the husband and the father are still preserved, in several letters in the French language, which are exceedingly curious. The archbishop of Canterbury had written to Isabella to exhort her to return, to which she had replied that Sir Hugh le Despenser was her enemy, and that she could not come because her life would be in danger. On the 1st of December, 1325, the king thus writes to the queen:—"Dame: Oftentimes we have commanded you, as well before the homage as since, to return to us with all haste, without any excuses. * * * Now, you have sent us word, by the honourable father, the bishop of Winchester, that you will not come, on account of the danger and doubt of Hugh le Despenser; at which we greatly marvel: the more so, that you bore yourself so amicably towards him, and he towards you, in our presence, and even at your departure you gave him especial promises, signs, and proofs of certain friendship; and afterwards sent him very especial letters, which he has shewn to us." The husband then goes on to say that no evil or disgrace has ever befallen her, except when "we have spoken to you, as we ought, words of chastisement in secret, without any other severity." To his son, he writes, under date of the 2nd of December: "Most dear son, remember in your youth and tender age, what we charged and commanded you, when you left us at Dover, and what you said to us in answer, with which we were greatly pleased; and do not trespass or contravene what we then charged you in any point, on no account. And since your homage has been received, go to our most dear brother, the king of France, your uncle, and take your leave of him; and then come away to us in the company of our most dear companion, the queen, your mother, if she come so soon. And if she does not come, come you, in all haste without longer stay; for we have a very great desire to see you and speak with you. And hereof fail not by any means, neither for mother, nor for any other person, as you regard our blessing."* But still the wife came not, nor the son. On the 1st March, 1326, the king again writes to the young Edward, commanding him to contract no marriage without his father's consent; defending Hugh le Despenser as his dear and loyal servant; bitterly adverting to the alliance of queen Isabella with Roger Mortimer, a false traitor, and the king's mortal enemy; and ordering his son immediately to return. In a letter to the king of France, of the same date, Edward says, that he truly perceives, as all men may perceive, that the queen does not love him as she ought to love her lord.† These domestic differences were soon brought to a public issue. The king of France, invaded Gascony, and Edward declared war against him. William, count of Hainault, received Isabella at his court, for the pope had exhorted Charles to dismiss her from Paris. The young Edward was contracted in marriage with Philippa, the daughter of the count. A force of two thousand men, under the command of John of Hainault, was placed at the disposal of Isabella; and on the 24th of September, the wife and the son of Edward did return to England, landing at Orwell in Suffolk, not as suppliants but as complainants, in arms for the redress of injuries. Isabella

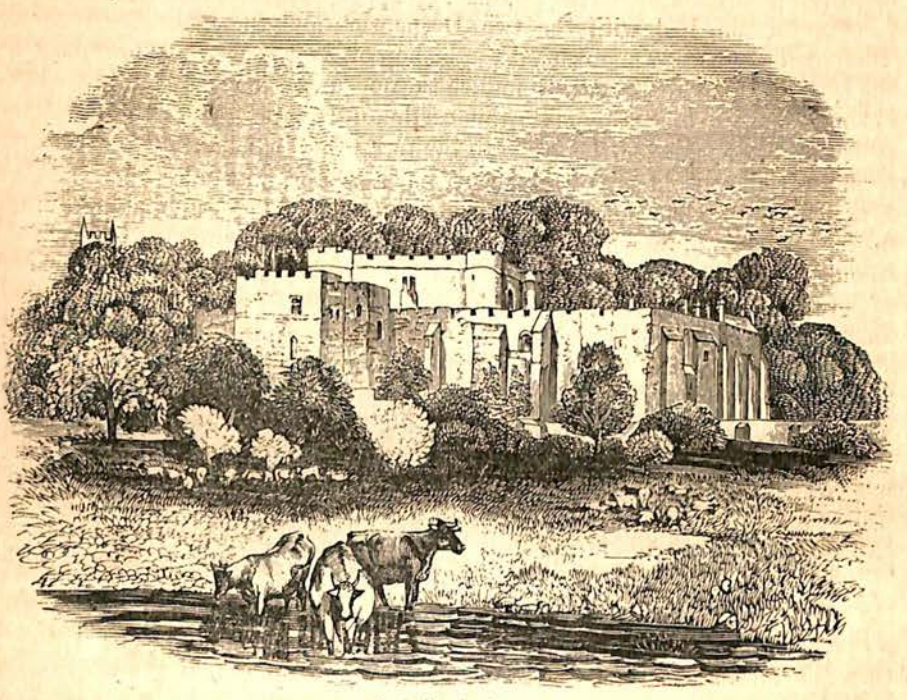
* Fœdera, vol. ii. part i. p. 616.

† Fœdera, vol. ii. part i. pp. 622, 623.

came surrounded by nobles who had been banished or fled when the insurrection of Lancaster failed. Powerful lords, including the brothers of the king, the earls of Kent and Suffolk; his cousin the earl of Richmond; and several bishops, joined Isabella. A proclamation was issued, stating that the queen, the prince, and the earl of Kent had come to free the nation from the tyranny of Hugh le Despenser. Edward, having appealed in vain to the citizens of London for aid, fled with the two Despensers and the chancellor Baldock. The populace rose, and murdered the bishop of Exeter, who had been sent by the king as envoy to France, to induce the queen and her son to return. The elder Despenser took refuge in the castle of Bristol. The burghers compelled him to surrender the place to the forces of Isabella; and after a brief form of trial, the old man was executed as a traitor, on the 26th of October. Edward the king had put to sea, with the intention of establishing himself in the Isle of Lundy, which had been fortified. He was unable to reach the island, and landed at Swansea, concealing himself in that neighbourhood. Meanwhile the prelates and barons who had taken part with the queen, assumed the powers of a parliament; and, having resolved that by the king's absence the realm had been left without a ruler, they appointed prince Edward guardian of the kingdom. The king at length surrendered to his cousin, the earl of Richmond; and was conducted, to the castle of Kenilworth. The younger Despenser, and the chancellor, were taken prisoners in Wales. They were carried to Hereford, where Despenser perished as "a wicked and attainted traitor," and his mutilated body was hanged on a gallows fifty feet high. The earl of Arundel and others were beheaded. Baldock died in prison.

Thus was a revolution accomplished which, of all the public iniquities of the middle ages, appears to combine the most odious and unnatural circumstances. A wife in arms against her husband; a boy employed as a tool to ruin his father; a people thirsting for revenge upon a king against whom indolence and incapacity were the principal charges. At the parliament which was summoned at Westminster, on the 7th of January, 1327, after a suspense of only one day, the young Edward was, by acclamation, declared king. On the 13th of the same month, by a bill of six articles, it was resolved that the reign of Edward of Caernarvon had ceased. The queen affected to believe that the parliament had exceeded its just power; and a deputation was accordingly sent to Edward, at Kenilworth, to bring back his resignation of the crown. The deputation returned with the extorted instrument; having gone through the ceremony of renouncing the fealty of the earls, barons, and others, by Sir William Trussel, their procurator. On the 24th of January, the heralds proclaimed the accession of Edward III.; and the young king was crowned on the 29th. In these hasty and violent proceedings, in which we cannot find that the unhappy prisoner of Kenilworth had a single friend or supporter, there is undoubtedly some dark mystery. Isabella, who was notoriously open to suspicion in her connection with Mortimer, had yet the support of the leaders of the Church and the nobles. The great body of the people were equally in her favour, and equally opposed to the continued rule of one who had not governed with wisdom, but in most instances without oppression. Let the terrible death of Edward II. atone for those faults of his conduct and character which are manifest, and for those which are unrevealed. He was murdered in Berkeley Castle, with circumstances of

horrible cruelty, after having endured the most atrocious indignities. Mortimer confessed, when his own life was about to be forfeited, that he had commanded the commission of the crime; and that Thomas Gournay and William Ogle perpetrated it. The "she-wolf of France" might be privy to the wickedness;



Berkeley Castle.

and in the forced seclusion to which, after a few years, she was condemned, "the shrieks of death" that rung "through Berkeley's roofs" might haunt her repose—

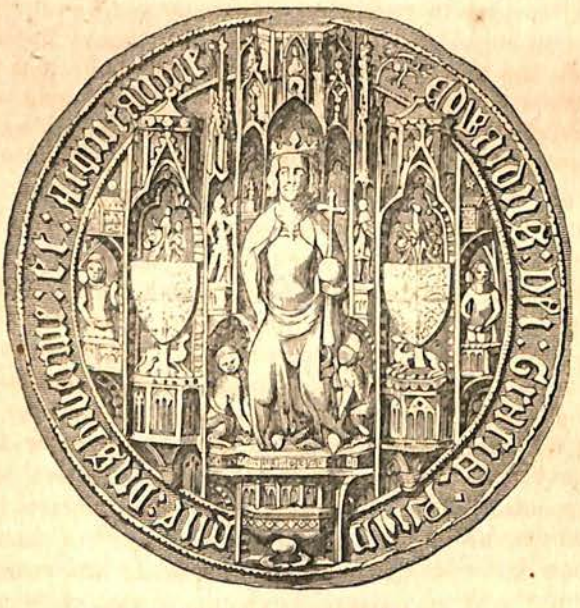
"Shrieks of an agonising king."

Of the truce with Scotland, concluded for thirteen years in 1323, scarcely four years had elapsed, when an invasion of England was determined on by King Robert Bruce. The Scottish historians justify this violation of the compact by stating that the name of Bruce, as king, was omitted in the instructions given to the English commissioners, for the conclusion of a final treaty of peace between the two kingdoms. This was a small matter upon which to ground a national quarrel. However we may sympathise with the Scottish leaders in their noble attempts to maintain the independence of their country, we must bear in mind that the wealth of England always presented a strong temptation for attack and plunder to the lords and people of the less fertile country. In June 1327, an army of twenty-four thousand Scots, under Douglas and Randolph,—for Bruce was sick,—crossed the borders, and ravaged Cumberland. The young Edward, with a precocious heroism, put himself at the head of a great army of English knights and archers, and of foreign soldiers under John of Hainault, which had assembled at York.

In the pages of Froissart, we find a vivid description, "How the king of England made his first journey against the Scots." Having marched to Durham, he followed the course of the invaders by the smoke of the desolating fires which had marked their progress. Still the Scots wasted the country around; and the large English army, encumbered with a vast camp-equipage, and marching "through marishes and savage deserts, mountains and dales," followed them in vain for two days. It was then determined to leave behind them the baggage and stores of provisions, each horseman carrying a single loaf; and on the third day they crossed the Tyne. Here suffering great privations, the English host remained seven days, looking in vain for their enemy, whom they expected to cross by the same ford. At length Edward proclaimed a great reward for the man who would discover to him where he would find the Scots; and Thomas de Rokeby led him back by a march of three days to the Wear, where they where encamped in huts, on a neighbouring hill. The two armies were ranged in order of battle; and, "then some of the lords of England brought their young king on horseback, before all the battalions of the host, to give thereby the more courage to all his people." But the river was between the armies, and the hill was inaccessible. Heralds summoned the Scots to come into the plain and fight; but the Scots answered, "Here we shall abide, as long as it shall please us." For three days the armies remained in this position; but on the fourth morning, when the English looked upon the mountain, the enemy was no more seen. Edward followed, and found them in a still more formidable position, and for eighteen days, "they lodged each against other." But on the first night two hundred Scots broke into the English camp, with the cry of "Douglas! Douglas! ye shall die, thieves of England," and they nearly captured the young sleeping king, cutting asunder the cords of his tent. At last, the Scots again silently retreated by a night-march, and the English, giving up the pursuit in despair, returned to Durham, and thence to York. This was the first lesson in warfare of the great Edward. The youth was out-generalled; and it is recorded that he wept, when he was finally circumvented by the skill of an enemy so inferior in numbers.

In the ensuing spring of 1328, a peace was concluded with Scotland, by which the independence of that country, under King Robert Bruce, was fully recognised, the claim of feudal superiority being wholly renounced. It was also agreed that the Scotch regalia, as well as "the stone of destiny," should be restored. Thirty thousand marks were paid by Scotland, in compensation for the damages caused by the invasion of the previous year. Further, the sister of Edward was contracted in marriage with David, the son of Robert Bruce, who became king, upon the death of his heroic father, in 1328. The treaty with Scotland was unpopular in England; and the Londoners resisted the removal of the famous coronation stone. The ex-Queen Isabella and Mortimer, who was created earl of March, were from this, and other causes, becoming odious. The young king was not considered reponsible for this wise but unpopular settlement of the ancient dispute as to Scotland being a fief of the English crown. In 1328, a few months after his return from his northern campaign, Edward was married to Philippa, daughter of the Count of Hainault, to whom he had been contracted by his mother. He was advancing to manhood, and had shown his courage

and activity in his march to the Tyne. But Mortimer and Isabella were still the ruling powers in the state. Dangers were gathering around them; and they put on a bold front to their enemies. A confederacy against them was formed between the earl of Lancaster, nominally the head of the regency, and the late king's brothers, Kent and Norfolk. These princes were irresolute, and Lancaster was visited by a heavy fine. The earl of Kent, a weak young man, was persuaded by the spies and agents of Mortimer, that Edward II. was still alive; and he was imposed upon to the extent of addressing a letter to the deposed king, under the belief that he was in captivity. The letter was conveyed to Isabella and Mortimer, who summoned a pretended parliament, composed of their partisans, which adjuged the unfortunate victim to die as a traitor; and he was accordingly beheaded on the 19th March, 1330. A little after this, queen Philippa gave birth to a son, Edward, so renowned in coming years as the Black Prince. It was time that the king should assert his own authority against his mother and her favourite. He confided his purpose to the earl of Montacute. A parliament was to assemble at Nottingham; and the ex-queen took up her residence in the



Great Seal of Edward III.

castle, with Edward and Mortimer. The castle was filled with guards; and the keys of its gates were taken every night to the private chamber of Isabella. But there was a subterraneous passage, leading from the west side of the sandstone rock on which the castle stands, the entrance to which from the road is still known as Mortimer's hole. This communication was made known to Edward and Montacute by the governor. In the silent midnight hour of the 10th of October, Montacute entered, with sufficient force, and being joined by the young king, they proceeded to the rooms of the principal tower, and having seized the object of their search, by forcing his chamber-door and slaying those knights who defended the entrance, they carried him off in

spite of Isabella's cries of "Spare my gentle Mortimer." The next morning the king issued a proclamation, in which he announced that the affairs of the kingdom had been evil-managed, to the dishonour of the realm, and to the impoverishment of the people; that he had caused the earl of March, and others, to be arrested, as the principal movers of these ills; and that all men should know that for the future he would himself govern his people by right and reason, as became his own dignity, and with the advice of the common council of the realm.* On the 26th of November, Mortimer was condemned as a traitor, by a parliament at Westminster. The charges against him were, that he had fomented the dissensions between the late king and his queen; that he had illegally assumed the power vested in the council of regency; that he had caused Edward II. to be put to death; that he had compelled the earl of Lancaster and others to pay excessive fines; and had instigated the plot against the earl of Kent. He was executed on the 29th of November, with four others, as his accomplices. The pope wrote to Edward not to expose the shame of his mother; and she, therefore, passed the rest of her life, twenty-eight years, in confinement at her manor of Risings.

We at length may quit this ghastly region of crime and retribution. In the annals of our country there is no era of twenty years so full of revolution and counter-revolution; of imbecile authority struggling with lawless force; of bitter hatreds and outraged affections; of proscriptions and executions and secret murders. Such a system of misrule, approaching at times to a state of anarchy, must of necessity have been accompanied by wide-spread corruption and general misery. There is a contemporary English poem, "On the evil Times of Edward II.," which describes briefly, but emphatically, some of the class-iniquities and national calamities of the days of Gaveston and the Despensers. According to this picture of manners, the fiend showed his mastery, and raised such a strife, that every lording was busy his own life to save; each was provoked to murder the other, and would spare none for kindred.† While these great lordings were hurled on a heap, the prelates of holy Church were blinded with covetousness.‡ And then came a murrain of the cattle, and a dearth of corn, and poor simple men were a-hungred.§ God was wroth with the world; for pride had driven peace and love and charity out of the land.‖ This quaint old rhymer speaks as a bitter satirist; but with a circumstantial precision which shows that he wrote from his own observation. Truth, he says, is forbidden the court of Rome, and truth dare not be seen amongst the cardinals. Simony and covetise have the world at their will.¶ When a church is vacant, he that gives most to patron and bishop has the preferment.** Abbots and priors ride with horses and hounds as if they were knights, while poor men cower at the abbey-gate all day in hunger and in cold.†† Who is fatter and ruddier than monks, canons, and priors? In each town, says the rhymer, I wot none easier life than is religion.‡‡ Of sin, deans and chapters take no account, and a man who has silver may serve the fiend long enough.§§ As he satirises the Church, so is he equally severe upon baron and knight. He accuses them even of cowardice; they are lions in hall, and hares in the field. Knightship is

* Fœdera, vol. ii. part ii. p. 799.
† Poem in "Political Songs," verse 423.
‡ *Ibid.*, v. 445.
§ *Ibid.*, v. 415.
‖ *Ibid.*, v. 460.
¶ *Ibid.*, v. 10.
** *Ibid.*, v. 454.
†† *Ibid.*, v. 130.
‡‡ *Ibid.*, v. 153.
§§ *Ibid.*, v. 192.

debased and lame of foot.* There is a new cut of squierie in every town —gentle men that should be, that are swollen with pride, and have cast nurture into the ditch.† Justices, sheriffs, mayors, and bailiffs—they know how to make the dark night out of the fair day. If the king raises a taxation, it is so twitted away, that half is stolen ere it is accounted for—there are so many partners. The rich are spared, and the poor are robbed. Every man is ready to fill his own purse, and the king has the least part, and he hath all the curse.‡ The pleader at the bar takes forty pence to speak a word or two for no good; and the false attorneys make men begin a suit they never would have thought of, and they get their silver for nought.§ The assizers condemn men for money, and the rich justice will do wrong for a bribe.‖ Sometime there were chap-men that truly bought and sold; traffic was once maintained with truth, but now is all turned to treachery.¶ So, concludes the satirist, is all the world blinded. We give a specimen of this curious production of the English language of the 14th century:—

"Pride hath in his paunter kauht the heie and the lowe,
So that unnethe can eny man God Almihti knowe.
Pride priketh aboute, wid nithe and wid onde;
Pes and love and charité hien hem out of londe
so faste,
That God wole for-don the world we muwe be sore agaste." **

Exaggerated as this picture of society may be, there can be little doubt that, in the transition state from the feudal relations between lord and villan, to a condition in which the commons had attained a certain amount of independence, there had arisen a general desire amongst the governing classes, ecclesiastical, military, and civil, to substitute cunning for force, and extortion for open plunder; that the larger cultivators and the traders, aspiring, as they do in all times, to the luxuries of those in higher stations, ground those beneath them with slight regard to justice. The Church had lost its ancient character of the protector of the poor; and the vices and oppressions of the monks had brought religion into contempt. Amidst all this, there was a great stirring of the national intellect. The wars of the crown were now supported by taxation of the people generally, instead of being conducted under the old tenure of knight-service. When the merchant or the yeoman had to draw his purse-strings, he became critical as to the mode in which he was governed. There was small communication between one district of the country and another; and thus, what we call public opinion could only be imperfectly formed. But in market and fair, in the guild and at the assize, men conferred and disputed; and whatever oppressions they endured were referred to the king's evil advisers. Thus, there was exultation in the land, when Gaveston, Despenser, and Mortimer fell, one after the other; and their deaths were considered a just punishment for the wrongs of the commons. In that class of the commons were not included the great body of the labourers. They made themselves heard at a more distant period. Meanwhile, a new epoch had opened. A young king had ascended the throne, full

* Poem in "Political Songs," verse 251. † *Ibid.*, v. 283. ‡ *Ibid.*, v. 289, 334.
§ *Ibid.*, v. 342, 350. ‖ *Ibid.*, v. 470. ¶ *Ibid.*, v. 358.
** *Paunter* is pantry; *kauht*, caught; *unnethe*, scarcely; *priketh*, rideth; *nithe*, strife; *onde*, envy; *hien*, haste; *wole*, will; *for-don*, destroy; *muwe*, may; *agaste*, afraid.

of martial ardour, ambitious, graced with all chivalric accomplishments, and gifted with many of the qualities of a sagacious ruler. His wars, however, founded on very doubtful pretensions, which appear to us of the present time manifestly unjust, were so brilliant in their success, that, in the pride of a nation that was now thoroughly English, the evils of administration, and especially the wrongs of the peasantry, were too often forgotten. Now and then a stand was made for liberty, and some just laws were enacted. But the military spirit was the pervading influence of the reign of Edward III.; and the encouragement of that national temper kept his throne secure. During this reign, chivalry put on its most attractive features of courage and courtesy; and those knightly qualities were never set forth more seductively than by the chronicler of chivalry, Sir John Froissart. The savage disregard of life—the massacres and plunderings that lie beneath this surface of romance—will display themselves as we proceed in our narrative. The condition of the general body of the people, such as it is described in the "Poem on the evil Days of Edward II.," is not so apparent in the usual historical relations.

Whatever might have been the ferocity and cruelty of the days of chivalry, whose most golden period belongs to the reign of Edward III., we may well believe that the spirit which it engendered had considerable influence in forming the character of what was now the English nation. Froissart delights in setting forth the peaceful graces of the regal and noble life; the minstrelsy and tales of glee; the dances and the carols. He goes forth to the chase with hawks and hounds. He sees the fairest maiden bestow the silken scarf upon the victor in the tournament. He hears without any shudder the cries of the herald, "The love of ladies,"—"Glory won by blood." He sees not the bleeding horse, and the gasping knight. There are death-wounds in the *melée;* but the wine-flask is in the lighted hall. In the same spirit does he describe the course of warfare—the brilliant charge of the cavalry, the unbroken ranks of the footmen, the fatal aim of the archers—the solemn confession before battle—the elation of heart at the cry of "advance banners" —the knighting in the field. The horrors are passed over in a few brief sentences, containing the emphatic words, "burnt"—"robbed"—"wasted" —"pillaged"—"slain"—"beheaded." And yet, out of all this, was engendered a better state of society, which could never have grown amongst an unchivalrous aristocracy and an unwarlike yeomanry. Out of the Norman oppressors and the Saxon serfs had arisen a great race, whose blood having mingled with that of the first Britons and their Roman masters, had at length produced one nation "inferior to none existing in the world. . . . Every yeoman from Kent to Northumberland valued himself as one of a race born for victory and dominion, and looked down with scorn upon a nation before which his ancestors had trembled." * This was the spirit which made Cressy, the first great popular remembrance, long cherished with a defying pride; but which had a positive effect for instant good upon the Englishmen who fought by the side of Edward and his son, as well as upon all who heard of their countrymen's daring and steadiness. Politically, the French war was unjust. Morally, it elevated the whole people. The same spirit which won

* Macaulay, History, vol. i. p. 18.

the great battles of the Somme and the Loire had to win many a constitutional fight against the attempted encroachments upon liberty of the powerful monarch who led the English lords and yeomen to victory. As the whole nation rose in military prowess—as the archer in his buff jacket became as important as the knight in his steel hauberk—the physical hardihood and the intellectual vigour of the people were more and more developed. The burgher became more resolved to maintain his free charters with his own right arm; and the noble found that his own security was mixed up with the liberty and happiness of the commons, and he joined with them in making redress of grievances go hand in hand with the grant of supplies. Then, too, men began to think. Miracles ceased in the presence of holy relics, and dispensations for sin came to be despised. The preaching of Wycliffe found willing hearers. The tales of Chaucer were read in the baronial hall, and in the student's chamber. The universities were 'filled' with scholars. The laws were administered in the language of the nation. The Anglo-Norman had given place to that noble tongue upon which our literature has been built. Five centuries ago, the course upon which the English people had to run their race was straight before them; and however they have been assailed by tyranny, or however corrupted by prosperity, they are still marching forward on the same vantage ground.

Edward was twenty years of age in 1332. His great talents, his resolved character, and his towering ambition, were rapidly developing themselves. In him, the martial spirit of his grandfather had revived with a loftier and more chivalrous generosity. His public actions were less regulated by his own arbitrary will than those of the first Edward; and he had a more extended range of opinion to propitiate than that of a feudal aristocracy. His wars

were essentially popular. When, in 1346, he resolved upon the invasion of France, he published a manifesto upon the cause of the war, which he addressed to the Provincial of the order of Preaching Friars in England, in which he exhorts him to urge his brethren to set forth this cause to their congregations in their sermons.* We shall have to advert to the subject matter of this address as we proceed; but we mention it here to shew that the great king did not manifest that indifference to the sentiments of his people, which the mere despot, and the agents of despotism, think themselves privileged to assume. His wars involved heavy charges upon the industry of the nation; but they were nevertheless invariably considered as national undertakings. If these undertakings had been regarded upon strictly reasonable principles by king and people, the young heir of Robert Bruce would not have been disturbed in his succession to the throne of Scotland; nor the right of Philip de Valois to be king of France disputed. The Scottish wars, whatever form they might assume, were unavoidable, as long as two military nations, undivided by seas or mountains, had aggressions to carry forward and injuries to revenge. The gradual interfusion of races and interests could be the only pacificator. The French wars, prolonged as they were for a hundred and twenty years, had a natural termination, when the plans of continental dominion were found to be utterly incompatible with the prosperity of our island realm. The importance of the Scottish wars passed away, for the most part, when Bruce had fought his great fight of independence. The French wars involve so many passages of the most vivid historical interest; present so many remarkable points of comparison between the two nations; and have had such an enduring effect upon the policy of both governments, that these events will require to be related with occasional detail till the extinction of the English power in France was happily accomplished.

The attempt of Edward Balliol to recover the crown of Scotland during the minority of the young king, David, arose out of the discontent of some English lords who claimed lands in that country. The king of England is supposed, with good reason, to have encouraged the attempt; but the passage of armed men through the northern counties was strictly forbidden; and Balliol sailed with his associates from the Humber, and landed in Fife, in August, 1332. His success was marvellous. On the 27th of September he was crowned at Scone. But his reverse of fortune was equally rapid. On the 16th of December he was surprised at Annan, and fled to the marches. During his brief tenure of power, Balliol had acknowledged that the crown of Scotland was a fief held under the crown of England; and Edward had concluded with him a treaty of alliance. Early in 1333, the Scots, under the leaders who acted in the name of king David, invaded England; Balliol commenced the siege of Berwick; and the English king came in May to his aid. On the 19th of July was fought the great battle of Halidon Hill, in which Edward was completely victorious. Here, amidst a fearful slaughter of his countrymen, fell the regent Douglas, and many earls and barons. Berwick was surrendered to the English, and Balliol was again seated on his uneasy throne. Then, at a parliament held at Edinburgh, a large portion of the south of Scotland was annexed to England. This impolitic dismemberment of the kingdom was an outrage upon the national feeling, and Balliol was again driven forth, in 1334.

* Fœdera, vol. iii. part i. p. 72.

Again, in 1335, Scotland was ravaged by the English forces, in concert with Balliol; and for several years a struggle was carried on, with varied success. But Edward had other objects presented to his ambition. The king of France had espoused the cause of the Scottish nation against Balliol and his powerful supporter; and Edward had now an ostensible motive for commencing a great war, for the purpose of asserting his pretensions to the crown of France. In a few years the adherents of David were the winners of fortress after fortress, and the son of Bruce, in 1341, returned to his kingdom.

In the manifesto of the 15th March, 1346, addressed to the Provincial of the Preaching Friars, king Edward states, that upon the death of his uncle, Charles, king of France, he being in his minority, by the advice of his lords spiritual and temporal, and of his most skilled councillors, sent ambassadors into France to demand the crown; and that they were compelled to return, their lives having been threatened by Philip, who had usurped the royal authority.* Charles IV., called the Fair, died early in 1328, leaving no male issue. But a posthumous daughter was born five months after his death. In the interval, Philip of Valois, who was cousin to the deceased king, had been appointed regent. Some French authorities state that Edward demanded the regency, but that Philip was appointed by the peers of France. But there can be no doubt that Edward put forward his pretensions in the way which he stated in his manifesto of 1346. In 1329, however, he went to France, and did homage for his lands there to his rival Philip. He was then only seventeen years of age, and was under the tutelage of Mortimer and his mother. But in 1337, after the king of France had taken part in the Scottish war, Edward boldly assumed the title of king of France, and prepared to enforce his claim at the sword's point. His claim rested upon these grounds. What is called the Salic law, by which females in France are excluded from succession to the throne, was an unwritten law; and was not even a well-defined and fixed principle in all its bearings. Although it set aside the female herself, Edward contended that it did not set aside the male heir of such female. His mother, Isabella, was sister to three successive kings; and though excluded from the throne herself, might transmit a title to her son. He was the nearest male heir through his mother. Philip of Valois, although the affinity was through his father, was not so near akin as Edward by one degree. The civilians were greatly divided upon the question, and Edward had, no doubt, abundant counsel to bring his demands to the arbitrement of warfare. In all his proceedings he seems to have conducted this great contest, as if it were a wager of battle, in which Heaven would decide the right by the issue. The waste of life, the destruction of property, never disturbed the course of feudal policy. And yet, in 1340, Edward, addressing Philip of Valois, demanded what he called his rightful inheritance; and added, "to prevent the mortality amongst Christians, since the quarrel apparently belongs to you and me, we are desirous that the controversy between us may be decided by our own persons, body to body; and in case you shall not vouchsafe this way, that then the dispute may be ended by the battle of one hundred of the most efficient persons of your party, and as many of my liege subjects." The king of France replied, that he had seen the letters addressed to one Philip of Valois, but as they did not come to him, he should return no answer, but as

* Fœdera, vol. iii. part i. p. 74.

soon as he should think fit would drive out of his kingdom those who had presumed to enter it in arms. Edward had invaded France from Flanders, in 1339, but upon this occasion he returned to England without striking any important blow. He had depended upon foreign alliances, which had failed him in the hour of need.

In 1340, Edward, who had gone over to England, leaving the queen at Ghent, was informed that Philip had collected a large fleet in the harbour of Sluys, at the mouth of the Schelde. He immediately resolved upon encountering his enemy at sea, and set sail from Orwell with a powerful armament. Arrived off Blankenberg, "he saw so great a number of ships, that their masts seemed to be like a great wood." * There was a mighty ship, the Christopher, which had been taken from the English the year before; and the first success in the battle of Sluys was the re-capture of this vessel. "This battle was right fierce and terrible; for the battles on the sea are more dangerous and fierce than the battles by land; for on the sea there is no recoiling nor flying —there is no remedy but to fight, and to abide fortune, and every man to show his prowess.†" This battle was indeed fierce and terrible; and the number slain and drowned amounted to many thousands. It was a hand-to-hand fight, in which the English archers did fearful execution. The victory was so complete, that the French courtiers did not dare to apprise Philip of the event which had transferred his entire fleet to his enemy. His buffoon was instructed to hint to him the issue of his great preparations to stop the passage of Edward into Flanders. The English, said the clever jester, are rank cowards, for they had not the courage to jump overboard like your Majesty's French and Normans did. The naval victory of Sluys was followed by the siege of Tournay. It was at this period that Edward challenged Philip to single combat. But that year a truce between France and England was concluded which lasted till 1342. In 1343 negociations for peace were carried on before the pope at Avignon, without any result. In 1344 the war was recommenced.

The character of Edward III. was produced by a combination of the qualities of the knight and the politician. He was ready to take the foremost place in the battle field; to run great hazards in his own person; to surround himself with all the pomp of chivalry, and to display its occasional courtesy and munificence. But he clearly understood the position of England with relation to the other European states; and he was not insensible to the advantages he possessed in the superior condition of his own people, and, what was of more importance, in their free spirit as compared with the French. France, England, and Flanders, had many points of resemblance, and were drawn closer together than any other European nations. But they had also essential points of difference. The nobles of France did not form a strong collective body like those of England. The people had not been blended with the aristocracy in the common assertion of their liberties. True freedom—that which has been won, and can be maintained—was unknown to France. There were no institutions which could be considered established or sound. There were continual changes of principles of government; no recognised rights, amidst alternations of sudden liberty and absolute power. Thus, there was no great popular class upon whom the king and the nobility

* Froissart, chap. 50. † *Ibid.*

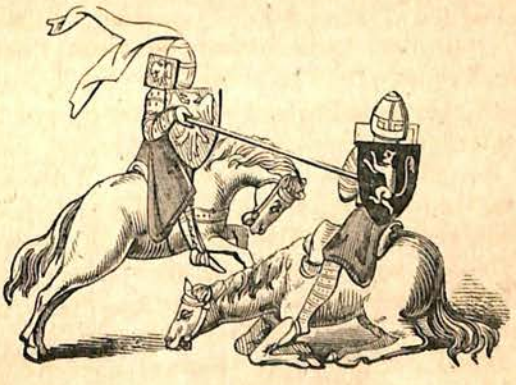
could rely, and at whose head they could confidently march to victory.* On the other hand, Flanders was essentially democratic. The burghers had accumulated riches far above those of the rest of Europe; and their corporations of trades in Ghent, Bruges, and other cities, had established a power before which their sovereign counts trembled, and their nobles scarcely exhibited their authority. The great enemy of their liberties was the king of France. He had defeated the revolted burghers at Cassel, in the first year of his reign; and the Flemings, now under their great leader, James Artevelde, were prepared for the strictest alliance with England. This extraordinary man, commonly known as "the brewer of Ghent," was a noble, allied to the first families in Flanders. He was "a brewer," as a prince in England is often "a fishmonger." He was a member of the guild of brewers.† Edward knew the value of this alliance with the Flemings and their democratic leader. "He condescended to cultivate the friendship of Artevelde, the celebrated brewer of Ghent," says Dr. Lingard. Their friendship was founded upon something higher than the patronage of the king, or the servility of the tribune of the people. Queen Philippa held the brewer's infant son, the famous Philip, at the baptismal font; and Artevelde thought to find a powerful protector for his Flemings against the tyranny of their native rulers, and the jealousy which France felt of a dangerous neighbour, by recommending that the burghers should depose Louis, the count of Flanders, and call Edward, prince of Wales, to the government. Bruges and Ypres supported the proposition. The populace of Ghent, suddenly turned against the man under whose authority they had arrived, in common with the other towns, at an unequalled height of prosperity—an authority far more potent than that of their sovereign count, who had removed himself for safety to France. They murdered Artevelde. At his instigation Edward had assumed the title of king of France. When the king heard of his friend's death, he put to sea in great anger, and returned to England. A deputation from all the trading towns, except Ghent, appeased his wrath, and the alliance was continued. "So, little by little," says Froissart, "the death of Jacques D'Artevelde was forgotten." This event happened in July 1345. The commercial intercourse between England and Flanders, was, at this time, of the greatest importance to both countries. France had scarcely any internal trade, and less foreign commercial intercourse. With Bruges on the north, and Bordeaux on the south, the traffic of London and Bristol and the Cinque Ports had become very large. The parliament of England willingly voted large sums for the war with France. While Edward was negociating with Artevelde, the earl of Derby was winning battles in Gascony. Our armies had also previously found an entrance to France through Brittany, in consequence of a disputed succession to the Duchy. Edward supported the claim of John de Montfort, against that of Charles of Blois, nephew of the French king. The defence of the castle of Hennebon by Jane de Montfort, during the captivity of her husband, is one of the most interesting episodes of the wars in which England was engaged. The historian and the artist have delighted to exhibit the heroic duchess, as described by Froissart with "the courage of a man,

* See Barante, who expresses this judgment in his preface to his "Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne," p. 43.

† See Barante, vol. i. p. 156.

and the heart of a lion," showing to the people of Rennes her infant boy, and saying, "see here my little son, who shall be the restorer of his father." They have painted her, after the old chronicler, besieged in Hennebon, and at the last extremity looking down along the sea, out of a window in the castle, and crying aloud, smiling for great joy, "I see the succours of England coming." Sir Walter Manny was her deliverer; and the road to France was open through Brittany.

All these attacks upon the French kingdom, conducted with various fortune by England, from 1338 to 1345, were but preludes to the great attempt of 1346; when Edward, relying less upon Gascon or Fleming than upon his English yeomen, landed near Cape la Hougue, on the coast of Normandy. He had with his army, his own first born son, now sixteen years of age. He had earls of famous name, barons, and knights. But his "four thousand men of arms, and ten thousand archers, besides Irishmen and Welshmen that followed the host on foot," were his main strength. They were the despised "fantassins" of the mounted warriors. They belonged to a novel system of tactics, which the French historian, Michelet, says "arose out of a new state of society;" and the deeds which they did "revealed a secret which nobody suspected,—that of the real want of military power of the feudal world, which was believed to be the only military world." The French nobles, themselves full of courage and contempt of death, despised the infantry and archers taken from the common people. The English earls and knights led them on foot to victory. The French leaders were afraid of trusting the people with the mighty bow. The English twice conquered France with a handful of yeomen. This is the feeling with which Barante, a Frenchman, speaks of Cressy and Agincourt—and he is right.



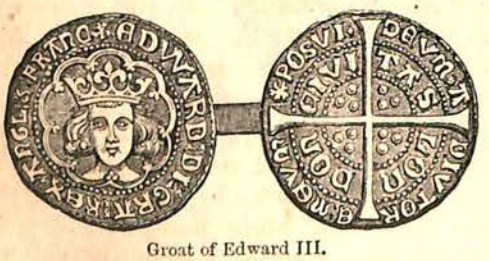
Knights Jousting.

Long-bow Archers.

CHAPTER XXX.

Nationality of the English—Landing of King Edward in Normandy—The March to the Somme—Passage of the Somme at Blanchetaque—Position of the English at Cressy—The Battle—The Victory—Cressy the Victory of the Yeomen—Scotland—Battle of Nevil's Cross—The Siege of Calais—The Six Burgesses of Calais—English Colony founded at Calais—The Order of the Garter—Windsor—The Great Pestilence—Statute of Labourers; Scale of Wages—Second Statute; Labourers confined to one locality.

EDWARD III. assumed the title of king of France in 1337, and in 1340 he quartered the arms of France with those of England. Upon his coins he was King of England and France. In that year a statute was passed which shews how completely the feeling of nationality had now possessed the race of Englishmen, and how jealous they were of the independence of their island. "Know ye," says Edward, "that whereas some people do think that by reason that the realm of France is devolved to us as right heir of the same, and forasmuch as we be king of France, our realm of England should be put in subjection of the king and of the realm of France in time to come. * * * * We will, and grant, and stablish, that our said realm of England, nor the people of the same, of what estate or condition they be, shall not in any time to come be put



Groat of Edward III.

in subjection nor in obeisance of us, nor of our heirs and successors, as kings of France."* All the supposed pre-eminence of the French race over the English had been obliterated in the amalgamation of three centuries. In 1362, it was enacted that all pleas in the courts "shall be pleaded, shewed, defended, answered, debated, and judged in the English tongue," and not in the French tongue, "which is much unknown in the said realm."† The English people, speaking the English tongue, had become inspired with the passion for continental dominion. Under the Norman kings and the Norman barons, they had been made to feel the yoke of the conquerors. They would now go forth themselves to conquest. There was a great issue to be tried, in a daring adventure for the possession of the noble land that their king demanded as his own. Edward was called by his rival Philip, "the wool-merchant." The growers of wool, the dealers of the staple, would go forth with bow and bill to encounter, at any odds, the chivalry of France. On the 10th of July, 1346, ten thousand archers of England were lodged on the sands near Cape La Hougue. As if the circumstances of the Norman conquest were to be parodied, Froissart says, "The king issued out of his ship, and the first foot that he set on the ground, he fell so rudely that the blood burst out of his nose. The knights that were about him took him up and said, 'Sir, for God's sake, enter again into your ship, and come not a land this day, for this is but an evil sign for us.' Then the king answered quickly, and said, 'Wherefore? This is a good token for me, for the land desireth to have me,' of the which answer all his men were right joyful."

The march of the invading army was in perfect conformity with the usual mode of making war in the feudal times. To desolate the country, to burn the towns if they resisted, to plunder the inhabitants even when they peacefully submitted; these were the aspects in which king Edward and his English presented themselves to the people over whom he claimed to rule. Keeping near the coast, they arrived at Barfleur, which was given up "for fear of death;" gold and silver and jewels were found, and "so much riches that the boys and villans of the host set nothing by good furred gowns." On they marched to Cherbourg, "a great and rich town, but into the castle they could not come, it was so strong." From Cherbourg they proceeded to Carenton, where the castle was taken by assault. During this progress along the sands and marshes of the coast, the fleet kept in view; and the captured burgesses that were worth ransom were sent on board. In this manner the army reached Caen. They entered the city; those who were ready to meet them in the field flying to their homes, when they saw the English advancing in three battalions, "with their banners and standards waving in the wind, and the archers which they had not been accustomed to see." But the people of the city cast down stones and timber and iron upon the English who had entered their streets, and killed and wounded five hundred of them. The king was wroth, and would have sacked and burnt the whole place, but he was better advised; and after three days marched forward, having won "great riches." Edward was now fully committed to the dangers of his adventure; for he sent his ships home, laden with plunder and prisoners. From Caen, he rode in the same order as before, "brenning and exiling the country,"

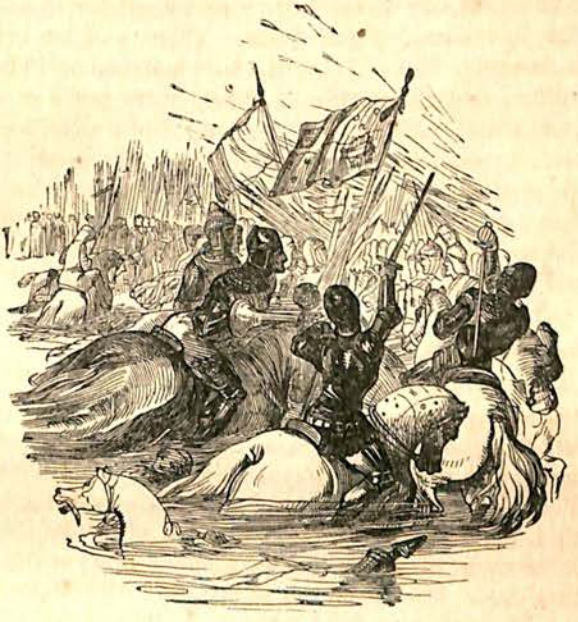
* Statutes of the Realm, 14 Ed. III.

† *Ibid.*, 36 Ed. III.

till he reached Evreux; and thence marched to Louviers, avoiding the castles and walled towns. His object was to cross the Seine at Rouen, and then march to Calais, expecting to be joined by an army of Flemings. But Philip was at Rouen before him, and was encamped on the right bank of the the river, having destroyed the bridge of boats. Below Rouen the passage of the Seine was too difficult to be attempted; and the English army was therefore led along the left bank by Vernon and Mantes, to Poissy,—a march of more than sixty miles. The bridge here was partially destroyed. The position of the English was now one of extreme peril. They were separated by two great rivers, the Seine and the Somme, from their Flemish auxiliaries; and Philip was collecting a great force as he proceeded towards Paris in a parallel march on the right bank of the Seine. There was no course but that of fronting the danger. Part of Edward's host marched on to St. Germains, and even to Neuilly; and the people of Paris "were not well assured of themselves, for it was not as then closed." King Philip caused all the penthouses of the city to be pulled down, and took up a position at St. Denis. Meanwhile, the English had repaired the bridge of Poissy, the broken arches and joists of which lay in the river; and Edward rested in the nunnery at Poissy, "and kept there the feast of our lady, in August; and sat in his robes of scarlet, furred with ermine." He then crossed the bridge at Poissy; while Philip, at St. Denis, was preparing to resist an attack upon Paris. The course of the English was now direct by Beauvais, on to the Somme, through Poix. But Philip had made a rapid march upon Amiens, detachments of his men at arms having preceded him along the right bank of the Somme, guarding every ford, and breaking down every bridge. The main body of his army was gradually shutting up the invaders in the nook between the Somme and the sea. Edward had reached Airaines; and he had sent out his marshals with three thousand archers and men at arms to find some passage. At Pecquigny they were boldly met, and again at Pont de Remy, and could accomplish nothing. They returned to Airaines and made their report, and "the king of England was right pensive." The English marched out of Airaines in the morning, and the French entered the town at noon.

In haste the English had departed from Airaines. When the French marched in, the meat was on the spits, the bread was in the oven, the tables were spread for dinner, the wine-tuns were at hand. There was no time for feasting. Rapidly they marched to Oisemont, where the king took up his quarters. The marshals had ridden to the gates of Abbeville and onward to St. Valery. The bridge of Abbeville was within the walls; the Somme widened and was more dangerous as it neared the sea. Prisoners of the country were brought in to Edward; and he "right courteously demanded of them if there were any amongst them that knew any passage beneath Abbeville." If any man would show such a passage, he, and twenty of his company should be quit of his ransom. In the hour of his need, help came from one of those humble men that the tyrannous host had made war upon in their corn-fields and hovels. "A varlet called Gobyn Agace stept forth and said to the king, Sir, I promise you on the jeopardy of my head I shall bring you to such a place." It was a passage a little above Abbeville, hard in the bottom with white stones, thence called Blanchetaque. Here the river was tidal; and Agace said, that when the flood was gone the stream was so low

that it might be passed without danger. The king slept not much that night. At midnight his trumpet was sounded; and at daybreak of that morning of August, the host had departed from Oisemont, led by Gobyn Agace to the much-desired ford. At the sun-rising they had reached it. But the flood was up; and they waited till the hour of prime,—the first canonical hour of prayer—until the tide ebbed. But a great company of horse and foot, to the number of twelve thousand, had been gathered under the command of a Norman baron, Sir Godemar du Fay, on the right bank of the river. The French and English struggled in the ford; and the Genoese



The Passage of the Somme.

of Philip's army did great trouble with their cross-bows; but the archers of Edward shot so wholly together that at length the way was cleared, and Sir Godemar du Fay was discomfited and fled. The king having crossed, he thanked God for his army's escape from their great peril; and dismissed Gobyn Agace with a present of a hundred nobles and a horse. The army then marched on, and lodged in the fields near Cressy. The king of France heard that the afternoon flood had come in at Blanchetaque; and so he rested that night at Abbeville.

It was Friday, the 25th of August, when the English army crossed at Blanchetaque. Leaving the valley, they would reach the fertile open country between the Somme and the Authie, "plentiful of wines and other vitaile." Edward knew how closely the French king was following him to fight; and he said, "Let us take here some plot of ground, for we will go no farther till we have seen our enemies." Dr. Lingard says,—"With his motives we are not acquanted; but he must have had some powerful inducement to hazard an engagement with such a disparity of force." His motive was probably not

the fanciful one that he should fight on his mother's heritage of Ponthieu, as Froissart records; but that he saw "a plot of ground somewhat to his advantage." The village of Cressy, now containing about sixteen hundred inhabitants, is in the valley of the little river the Maye; and behind it the ground gently rises into a broad ridge, whose elevation commands the country through which the French army would advance from above or below Abbeville. About midnight Edward lay down to rest; and he rose betimes in the morning and heard mass with the prince, his son. Then he commanded all the men to draw near the field which he had appointed. He caused a park, or enclosure, to be made by the wood-side, behind his host; and there all the horses and carriages were brought, for every man was to fight on foot. The forest of Cressy, which is now bounded by the Maye, then probably extended towards the ground upon which Edward had taken his position. The English army was formed in three battalions, the first being under the nominal command of the prince of Wales, who had with him Warwick, and Chandos, and other valiant knights. It consisted of eight hundred men-at-arms, two thousand archers, and a thousand Welsh. The second battalion had eight hundred men-at-arms and twelve hundred archers. The third battalion, of seven hundred men-at-arms and two thousand archers, occupied the summit of the hill, under the command of the king. It has been doubted whether these numbers, as given by Froissart, are not taken too low. The chronicler records that four thousand men-at-arms and ten thousand archers, besides the Welsh and Irish, landed at La Hougue. We find the four thousand men-at-arms diminished at Cressy to two thousand three hundred; and the archers to five thousand two hundred. After the marchings and fightings, the hunger and the intemperance, of seven weeks, we can easily believe that only about half the number were left. At nine o'clock of the morning of the 26th of August, this little army, having eaten and drunk, lay down, each man on the earth, with his bow and his sallet (helmet) beside him; and patiently waited the coming of an enemy ten times their number.

On the same Saturday, the French king and his host, who had crossed the Somme by the bridge of Abbeville, marched betimes out of that town; and when they had advanced two leagues, approaching towards the English, four knights went forward to reconnoitre. The roads were crowded with country people who cried—"Let us slay them all." The four knights saw the little army motionless on the ground, ready for battle; and they returned and exhorted Philip to rest for that day, for it would be late before they could set their ranks in order. The command was given to halt; but the horsemen in the rear continued to press forward, and those in front, resolved to have the glory of a victory, rode in advance till they saw the battalions of Edward on the high ground, and then suddenly turning back threw the unmanageable multitude into confusion. The Genoese archers, weary of their long march on foot, were unwilling to fight that day; but the king of France became excited amidst the tumult about him, and commanded them to begin the battle. These soldiers, fifteen thousand in number, according to Froissart, were tardily coming up to the battle field, when the sky suddenly became darkened. There was a partial eclipse of the sun, and then a storm of rain and thunder. At five o'clock in the evening the sun again shone out in autumnal splendour; and the Genoese were close to the English. Froissart

describes this battle as "the battle between La Broye and Cressy." On the road from Abbeville to La Broye the table-land of Cressy is to the north-west, as seen from Froyelles. As we saw it from that point at five o'clock of a summer afternoon, when the sun was westering, we felt the accuracy of Froissart's narrative, that when the air began to wax clear, and the sun shone fair and bright, "it was right in the Frenchmen's eyen and on the Englishmen's backs." With this disadvantage the Genoese approached, with their cross-bows wound up. They made a great leap and cry; but the English stirred not. A second and a third time they leapt and uttered a fell cry; but the English stirred not. The Genoese at last shot fiercely. Then stepped forth the English archers one pace, and their arrows flew so wholly and so thick that it seemed snow. The cross-bow men fled; and the French king crying out, "slay these rascals," the men of arms dashed in amongst them, and cut them down. Again the English yeomen drew their bow-strings; and the terrible shafts slew horse and men, the French knights and the poor Italians, and the press was so thick that one over-threw another. Some order at length was restored in the French ranks. The English archers stirred not from their position. At whatever point the French came on they saw "a great hedge before them." The earl of Alençon and the earl of Flanders led their men in some order to skirt the archers, and they joined battle with the Prince of Wales's battalion. The king of France tried to reach them when he saw their banners, but there was the great hedge of archers to interrupt his progress. Once only was the issue of this dread fight doubtful. The king, says Froissart, stood "on a little windmill hill" with his reserve. On the highest point of the ridge is a knoll about fifteen feet above the general level, with an ancient circular stone windmill upon it. Tradition says it is the spot where Edward stood; and there is nothing in the character of the ground to make one doubt the accuracy of this tradition. There is no other "little windmill hill," though there are many windmills around. The one window of the mill commands the road from Abbeville to La Broye.* There then, when the battle was at the hottest, a knight came to the king, and said that Warwick, and Oxford, and the prince of Wales, were fiercely fought withal, and were sore handled, and they desired aid from him and his men. Then the king asked if his son

Genoese archer winding up, or bending, his cross-bow.

* The mill itself, though damaged by long exposure, is of that peculiar fine circular masonry which may be seen in towers of the fourteenth century, of which the Cæsar's tower, now the Bell tower, at Windsor is an example.

were dead or hurt, or felled to the earth; and the knight answered "No." "Say then to them that sent you," replied the king, "that they suffer him this day to win his spurs, and ask me not for aid while my son is alive."

Windmill at Cressy.

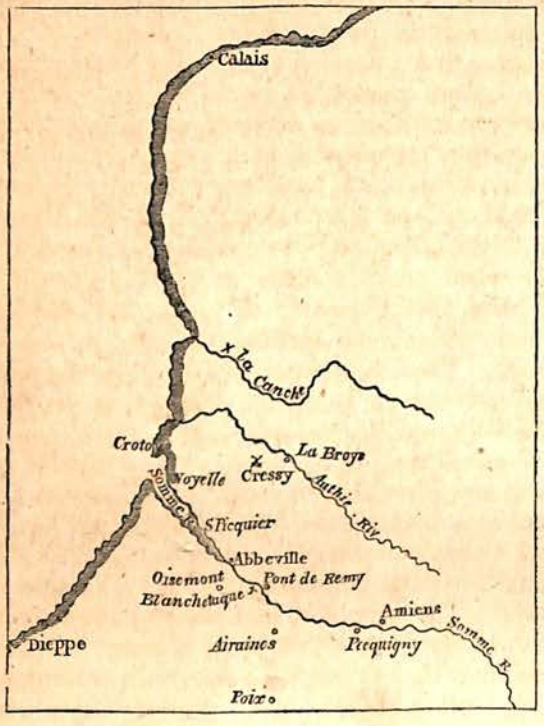
This was the spirit of chivalry rather than the caution of sound generalship. It was in the same spirit that the king of Bohemia, who was nearly blind, told his men to lead him so far forward that he might strike one stroke with his sword; and they all tied the reins of their bridles each to the other, that they should not lose him in the press; and they were all slain, the king in the midst. On a cross-road from Cressy to Fontaines-sur-Maye, which was probably in the midst of the battle-field, is a rude cross, where tradition says the blind old man was buried. Before that autumn sun was set the work was done. Alençon was killed, and the count of Flanders; Aumarle, and Loraine, and Louis of Blois, and Auxerre, and St. Pol. Earls and knights, who had come out of the gates of Abbeville that morning in gallant array, with trumpet and banner, were slaughtered or had fled. But "the Englishmen never departed from their battles for chasing of any man, but kept still their field, and ever

Cross of the burial-place of the King of Bohemia.

defended themselves against all such as came to assail them." Before even-song time the French king had not threescore men about him. And then John of Hainault took the king's horse by the bridle, and led him away, till he came to the castle of La Broye; and the king called out in the darkness that they should "open the gate quickly, for this is the fortune of France." There the king stayed not, but rode through the night to Amiens. Upon the field of Cressy torches were lighted, for it was very dark; and Edward the king came down from the little hill, and went to his son, and kissed him, and said, "Fair son, God give you good perseverance. Ye are my good son, that have thus acquitted you nobly. Ye are worthy to keep a realm." And

the prince inclined himself to the earth, honouring the king his father. Thus ended the great day of Cressy—a day of terrible slaughter—preceded by weeks of devastation, and followed up by years of contest and suffering. But it was a day on which the steady courage that was the result of the comparatively free condition of the yeomen of England, was first asserted on a great scale. From that time the feudal pretension of the iron-clad knights to be the only soldiers was practically at an end. The battles of England were thenceforth to be won by bow and bill. When the ancient weapons were exchanged for the matchlock and the pike, and these again for the rifle

and the bayonet, the same spirit which made every yeoman in that field of Cressy stir not one foot, whilst the great plain before them was filled with ten times their number of men at arms, has carried their descendants through many a desperate struggle, and showed from age to age "the majesty with which the British soldier fights."



Cressy and the vicinity.

The slaughter of Cressy was not completed on that last Saturday evening of August, 1346. On the Sunday morning there was a heavy fog; and an English detachment of five hundred lances and two thousand archers went out to scour the country. They fell in with two separate French forces, which they almost annihilated. The heralds of the English went over the great battle-field, and reported that they had found the bodies of eleven princes, eighty bannerets, twelve hundred knights, and thirty thousand inferior persons. On Monday the king departed for Montreuil; and on Thursday the 31st his army sat down before Calais, to commence the memorable siege, which lasted till the August of 1347.

The absence of king Edward in France presented a favourable opportunity to the Scots for a hostile demonstration against England of a formidable character. David II., the son of the great Bruce, had been four years in Scotland, after his long residence at the court of France. He was ready to attend to the suggestions of his friend king Philip as his truest policy. He resolved, therefore, upon an invasion of England, whilst Edward was besieging Calais, and Derby was winning battles in Gascony. In the beginning of October David entered Cumberland; took the fortress called "the pyle of Liddell;" and, with no exception to the ordinary course of cruelty and devastation, beheaded its governor, and went on into the bishopric of Durham, slaughtering and plundering. But an English army had assembled at Auckland, under the great Norman barons and the military prelates, with which army was queen Philippa. She went from rank to rank "desiring them to do their devoir—to defend the honour of her lord." At Nevill's Cross the armies met. The battle was won by the English archers. The Scots, with their "great axes, sharp and hard," presented in their close array a fatal mark for the unerring bowmen, of whom, according to Roger Ascham, there was a Scottish proverb, "That every English archer beareth under his girdle twenty-four Scots." David fought with great bravery, and was at last taken prisoner

by John Coupland, a squire of Northumberland. He was conducted to London, and lodged in the Tower.

Three days before the festival of All Saints, queen Philippa joined her lord at Calais. She took with her a great company of ladies; and there was feast and revelry around those beleaguered walls. King Edward was conducting his operations by the slow but certain process of blockade. He warred not against the devoted town with scaling ladder and catapult, nor with the formidable machines which the discovery of gunpowder is held to have called into use at this period. The French king was approaching with a great host to raise the siege. The nobles, and knights, and men-at-arms that had escaped the slaughter or captivity of Cressy, had been re-organised. Edward would not put the issue of the war upon another battle in the open field. He rendered Calais inaccessible. His fleet blockaded the coast; he established his army in a new town of huts, which rose outside the wall; he threw up entrenchments strongly guarded. The French governor had turned out of the town every inhabitant who had not an independent supply of provisions for several months. Seventeen hundred men, women, and children, thus dispossessed of their homes, approached the English camp. They received each a meal, and two pieces of silver, and went their forlorn course into the highways. Five hundred more unhappy beings were afterwards thrust out, and perished between the walls of Calais and the English lines. At the Whitsuntide of 1347, king Philip hoisted the oriflamme, and led a hundred and fifty thousand men to Whitsand. The approach to Calais by the coast was a dangerous undertaking; for a large fleet, with archers in every vessel, was ready to guard the shore. The other road through the marshes was secured by strong defences, especially at the bridge at Neuillet. For six weeks Philip remained inactive, having sent a cartel to Edward to come forth and fight; and he then took his way to Amiens, and gave every man leave to depart. The governor of Calais immediately hung out the flag of England and asked to capitulate. The garrison had suffered every extremity of misery, having eaten their horses and their dogs. All hope of relief was gone. Edward demanded that they should surrender at discretion. The scene which followed is one which dwells on the mind of every reader of history, when the details of battles and negociations are passed away, and have left no impression. The story of the six burgesses of Calais and queen Philippa has been told by Froissart with surpassing dramatic power; and no scepticism of those who fancy that history should reject whatever has the interest of romance, ought to prevent us repeating it, as closely as we can in his own words, with needful condensation.

Sir John of Vienne, the governor of Calais, stands upon the wall of the town, and makes a sign that he would speak with some one of the English host. Thither come to him Sir Walter Manny, and another knight; and the governor makes his request that king Edward would take the town and castle, and all the goods therein, and let them depart. But Sir Walter Manny said that he knew something of the king's mind, which was, that all should submit themselves to his pure will, to ransom such as he pleaseth, and to put to death such as he listeth. Sir John of Vienne answered, that though they had endured much pain, they would endure as much more, rather than consent that the worst lad in the town should have any more evil than the

greatest of them all. Sir Walter went back to the king, and, after much debate, the king resolved that all the grace he would award was, that six chief burgesses of the town should come out bare-headed, bare-footed, and bare-legged, and in their shirts, with halters about their necks; and, with the keys of the town and castle in their hands, thus yield themselves purely to his will, and the rest he would take to mercy. Sir John of Vienne stood again upon the wall to receive the king's answer. He then went into the market-place, and sounded the common bell, and told his sad report, and the people wept, and he himself wept piteously. Then stood forth the richest burgess of all the town, Eustace de St. Pierre, and said, that to save the residue of the people he would be the first to put his life in jeopardy. When he had thus spoken, every man worshipped him, and divers kneeled down at his feet with sore weeping. Then another honest burgess, John Dayre, rose and said, I will keep company with my gossip Eustace. And James of Wyssant, and Peter his brother, and two others, declared the same. Then they went out of the gate, apparelled as the king desired, and stood between the gate and the barriers. And the captain delivered them to Sir Walter Manny, and told him that they were the most notable burgesses of all the town, and begged him to pray the king to have mercy on them; and Sir Walter said, I shall do the best for them I can. And the six burgesses knelt before the king, and held up their hands, and said, We submit ourselves clearly unto your will and pleasure, to save the residue of the people of Calais, who have suffered much pain. The earls, and barons, and others who were there, wept for pity; but the king looked felly on them, for greatly he hated the people of Calais; and he commanded their heads to be struck off, and would hear no man in their behalf for mercy. Then the queen, being great with child, kneeled down, and said: Gentle sir, since I passed the sea in much peril, I have desired nothing of you; therefore now I require of you, in the honour of the Son of the Virgin Mary, and for the love of me, that you will take mercy of these six burgesses. The king beheld the queen, and stood still awhile in a study, and then said,—Ah, dame, I would you had been now in some other place; but I cannot deny you. I give these men to you, to do your pleasure with them. And the six burgesses were brought into the queen's chamber, newly clothed; and she gave them to eat at their leisure; and bestowed upon each six nobles; and caused them to be taken through the host in safety, and set at liberty. This is the relation of Froissart. Some historians would infer that the king was not in earnest in threatening

to put the burgesses to death. We take the story as we find it; not believing that it can be improved by any prosaic explanation.

After the surrender of Calais, an armistice was entered into between the rival kings. Within a week after he had taken possession of the town, Edward addressed a precept to the authorities of the principal places of England, commanding them to proclaim that any of his subjects, whether merchants or otherwise, who should come with their goods to the town of Calais, should be provided with habitations at such a rent as might content them, and might dwell there securely with their families in the enjoyment of all their liberties and privileges.* The king desired to found an English colony in this town, which he had won from France at such a heavy cost. For two centuries Calais remained in possession of the English crown; and the people attached the greatest importance to its occupation; believing that, whilst England was mistress of this nearest port of communication, the keys of France hung at her girdle.

Statue of St. George at Dijon.

Edward returned to England in October. The victory of Cressy had produced no actual result in the great controversy between the two kingdoms beyond the acquisition of Calais; but the character of the king, and the character of the nation, were elevated. The yeoman had taken his proper position side by side with the knight. Cressy became a rallying cry whenever Englishmen thought of battle and dominion. The false ambition engendered a true heroism. Edward was naturally ready to associate the memory of his great victory with the ostentation of chivalry. He had summoned illustrious knights to a feast of the Round Table at Windsor, before his invasion of

* Fœdera, vol. iii. part i. p. 130.

France. He now solemnly established the statutes of the Order of the Garter. In 1349 there was high festival at Windsor; when the king and twenty-five companions of the Order, "all clothed in mantles of fine woollen cloth of blue colour, powdered with garters, and each wearing the great collar of the Order," went in solemn procession to the chapel of St. George, where the ceremonies of installation were performed. St. George, the archbishop of Alexandria—whose ecclesiastical career of violence and rapacity had been forgotten after the lapse of seven centuries, when the Crusaders adopted him for their saint—St. George the victorious, with all those fabulous accomplishments which made him the dragon-slayer and the virgin-deliverer, became the patron of the Order of the Garter, and the tutelar saint of England. The "Black Book" of the Order, written in the days of Henry VIII., says, that St. George in a dream inspired the lion-hearted Richard to buckle a leather on the legs of each of his most favoured companions in arms; and that Edward therefore made the Garter the badge of his knightly order—a symbol of fellowship in chivalry. The romantic legends connect the emblem of the Order with the story which Froissart tells, "how the king of England was in amours with the Countess of Salisbury;" and how the noble woman repressed his unhallowed passion. "Evil be to him that evil thinks," says the legend, became the motto of the Order, when the king picked up the garter of her whose "fresh beauty and goodly demeanour" were ever in his remembrance. It is "a vain and idle romance," say some solemn narrators; as if chivalry were not a perpetual succession of vain and idle romances. To test the usages of such times by the thoughts and manners of our own, is to pass over what is characteristic of the feudal age, in which the fierce passions, the daring adventures, the constant restlessness of men without intellectual pursuits, were associated in their few peaceful seasons with an almost childish love of luxurious gratification and senseless pageantry; and when the real courtesy which sought to do honour to the brave and the fair was mixed up with exaggerated compliments and frivolous conceits. Writers who apply a moral scale derived from the present to these exhibitions of the past, speak of Edward as cowardly when he stood on the windmill-hill at Cressy, while his son was fighting below him; and of the Black Prince, as assuming the pride which apes humility, when he waited at Poitiers on his royal prisoner at supper. Very truly has a great historian said, "How many pages are written to explain events wholly conforming to the spirit of their age! Whereas, if we left the facts on their true theatre, living, as it were, in the midst of the circumstances which surrounded them, our imagination would receive natural impressions of actions and characters."*

Edward III. had a strong affection for Windsor. In a letter to the pope, in which he claims certain privileges for the college which he had there established within his castle, he speaks of it as a place in which he had his birth.† In the same letter he claims similar privileges for his canonical establishment in his palace of Westminster. In the palace of Westminster was the famous chapel of Saint Stephen, completed with unusual magnificence in 1347—the gem of English art, on which "was lavished all that the metropolis could produce most exquisite in the arts of design; and this not in

* Barante, "Ducs de Bourgogne," Preface, p. 13.

† "In quo maternus uterus nos eduxit." Fœdera, vol. iii. part i. p. 342.

architecture only, but the best works of sculpture, and the highest class of painting were put into requisition for its adornment." * In the reign of Edward VI. the sculptured arches and the painted walls were boarded over, and the chapel of the English kings, as beautiful as the Saint Chapelle of Paris, now so exqusitely restored, was made the House of Commons. At the union with Ireland the old wainscoting was taken down, and the curious paintings, then revealed to a tasteless generation, were destroyed. The fire of 1834 completed the ruin. Windsor had a better fate. Edward III., when relieved from the pressure of the French war, applied himself to the enlargement of his birth-place. The old castle, with the exception of three towers on the west, which still remain, was pulled down, and a new castle, over which the standard of England has floated for five centuries, was erected during his reign. In his twenty-third regnal year, 1349, his letters-patent went forth to press hewers of stone, carpenters, and other artificers; and the same principle of impressing workmen was put in force during twenty years. William of Wykeham was his chief architect. The system of impressment offers an illustration of the condition of the people; and is one among the many proofs of the semi-slavery that was attempted to be imposed when the English were fast passing out of a state of serfdom.

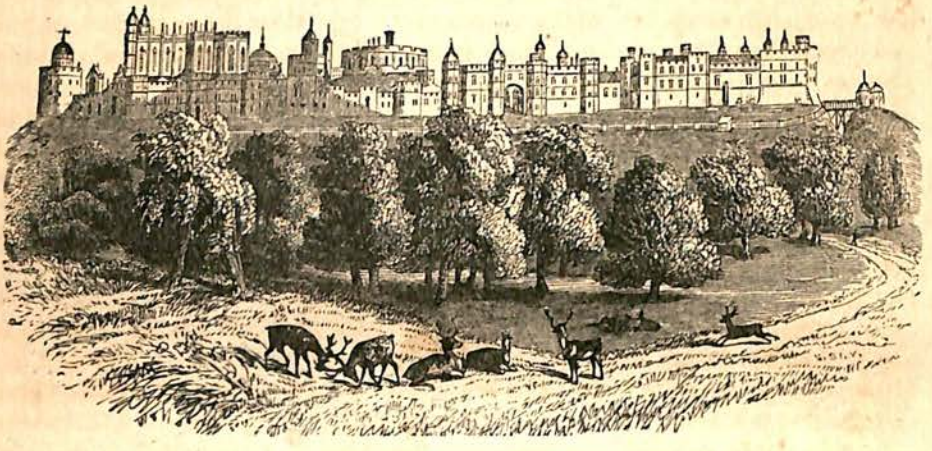
Specimen of old paintings in St. Stephen's Chapel.

When any general misfortune with which a people is visited becomes an epoch from which their legal instruments are dated, we may form an accurate notion of the intensity of the infliction. In this reign there were three terrible visitations of pestilence. The first and the greatest lasted from the 31st of May to the 29th of September, 1349; † and in this year we find many charters and other documents dated, not as the twenty-third of Edward III. but as the year of the Great Pestilence. Within a month after the jousts and tournaments, the banquets and dances of Windsor, the land was suddenly stricken with what was called the Black Plague. According to the best accredited accounts this disease originated in Upper India and China, in 1346; and gradually spreading through Asia, in four years comprehended nearly all Europe. In 1348 Italy was afflicted with the pest, at the same season as England in the succeeding year. Boccaccio, in his introduction to the Decameron, has given the most vivid description of this visitation. He tells us of the rich shutting themselves up in their houses, passing their time in such

* Fergusson, "Handbook of Architecture," vol. ii. p. 870.

† This term is given by Sir H. Nicolas, upon the authority of Sir Richard St. George, Clarencieux King of Arms in the time of Charles I. It differs from other accounts, which make the duration of the pestilence much longer.

pleasures as they could obtain; of the licentious abandoning themselves to every intemperance; of the almost general heartlessness with which even the family ties were disregarded, whilst individuals thought only of their own safety. He tells, too, of the condition of the lowest class, who died by thousands without any aid or solace in their deserted poverty. In England, the pestilence, according to a Register of the Abbey of Gloucester, left scarcely a third part of the population remaining. This is probably an exaggeration. The proportionate account of destruction recorded in Italy was three out of five, of all sexes, ages, and conditions. The effects of this plague are to be traced in the acts of the English government. The great



Windsor Castle in the 16th century.

and rich, according to the general testimony, escaped the immediate consequences of the epidemic. But their lands went out of cultivation from the want of labourers; and those who could carry away their capital fled to other countries. On the 1st of December, 1349, the king issued a precept to the mayors and bailiffs of all the ports, stating that no small portion of the people being dead of the pestilence, and the treasury of the kingdom being greatly exhausted, it had been notified to him, that many persons were quitting the country with their wealth, which, if tolerated, would leave the land equally destitute of men and money; and upon these grounds he directs that no man be suffered to leave the kingdom, except he be a merchant, notary, or messenger.* But the black plague left still more enduring effects than the great mortality—soon to be repaired by hasty marriages—or the emigration, thus forcibly arrested. It produced "The Statute of Labourers"—an arbitrary Act, whose principles, however gradually mitigated, pervaded the relations of employer and servant long after the days of feudal despotism, and which still cling to our institutions in the Law of Settlement. The statute was one of unmitigated selfishness. But it appears to be an universal law of such visitations, in times which looked upon them only as manifestations of the Divine wrath, and not of the mercy which was to bring good out of evil, that they rendered the powerful more oppressive, the rich more greedy, and the sensual more abandoned. "Let us eat and drink, for

* Fœdera, vol. iii. part ii. p. 191.

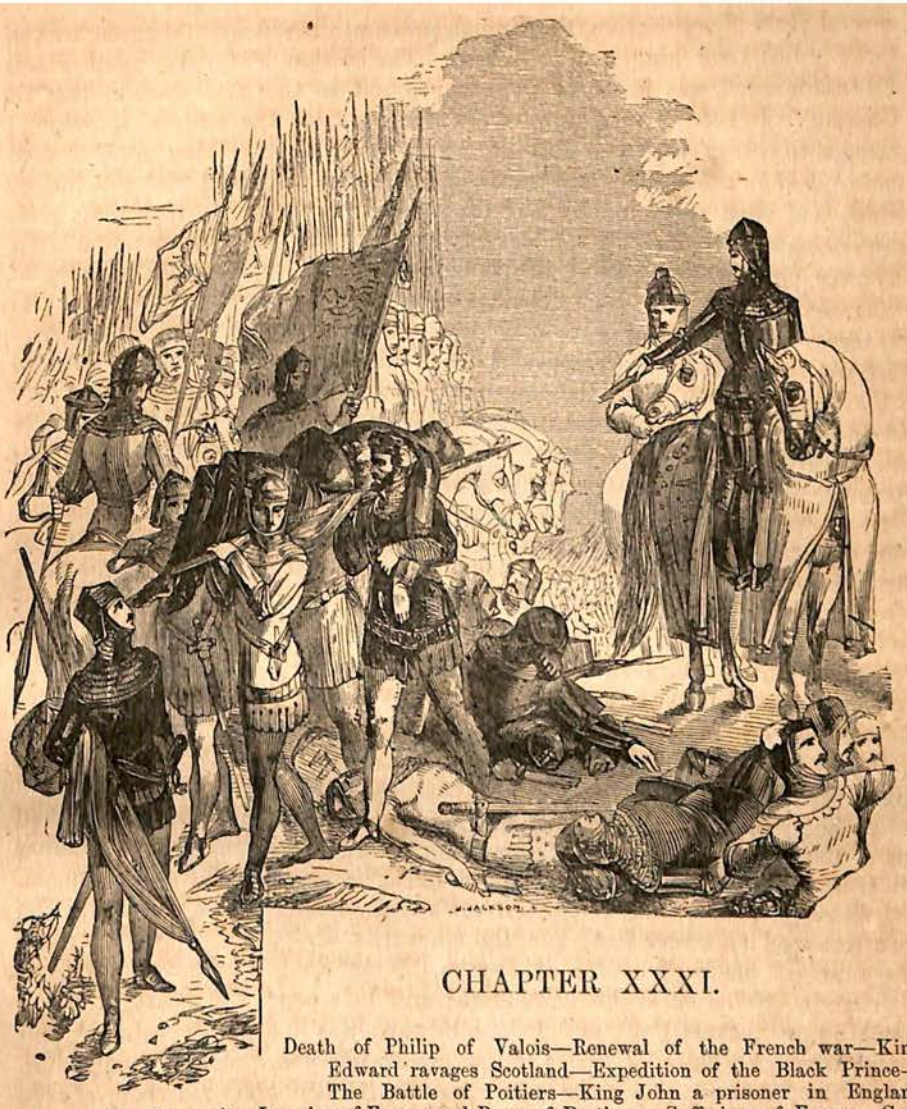
to-morrow we die." The author of the "Continuation of the Chronicle of William de Nangis" says, speaking of the continent, that after the pestilence men became more covetous and litigious—charity growing more cold, and iniquity and ignorance more abounding. There were few left to teach the young. The generation was demoralised.

The preamble of this remarkable statute states the exigency which demanded it, without any of those attempts to conceal a real motive which modern legislation sometimes resorts to: "Because a great part of the people, and especially of workmen and servants, late died of the pestilence, many seeing the necessity of masters, and great scarcity of servants, will not serve unless they may receive excessive wages." The workmen and servants were practically aware of the natural law which regulates wages,—their dependence upon the number of labourers seeking employment. The government set their ordinances in opposition to that natural law. It was enacted that every able-bodied man and woman, not being a merchant, or exercising any craft, or having estate or land, should be bounden to serve, whenever required so to do, at the wages accustomed to be given in the twentieth year of the king, and in five or six common years next before. And that if any man or woman, whether free or bond, should be required to serve at such customary wages, and would not, he or she should be committed to the next gaol. It also enacted that labourers departing from their service should be imprisoned; and that those masters who consented to give the higher wages should be liable to be mulcted in double the amount paid or promised. The statute then goes on to apply the same regulations to all artificers,—saddlers, skinners, white-tawers, cordwainers, tailors, smiths, carpenters, masons, tylers, shipwrights, carters. But to balance the low wages against the price of commodities, it was also enacted, that butchers, fishmongers, brewers, bakers, poulterers, and all sellers of victual, shall be bound to sell the same for a reasonable price. It was moreover enacted, that no person should give alms to such as might be able to labour, or presume to favour such in their sloth, under pain of imprisonment. But the laws of nature were too strong for the laws of policy. Two years after, we have another statute, which recites that, "it is given the king to understand in this present parliament, that the said servants, having no regard to the said ordinances, but to their ease and singular covetise, do withdraw themselves to serve great men and others, unless they have livery, and wages to the double and treble of what they were wont to take before." A scale of wages is then set forth for labourers in husbandry; and the wages of carpenters, masons, tylers, and others concerned in building, are also fixed. The principle of confining the labourer to one locality is established by enacting, with the exception of the inhabitants of Stafford, Lancaster, Derby, Craven, and of the Welsh and Scotch marches,—who may come and go to other places in harvest time,—"that none of them go out of the town where he dwelleth in the winter, to serve the summer, if he may serve in the same town." The first "Statute of Labourers," in what regards a fixed rate of wages, could not have been enforced without a limitation of the area in which the labourer should seek employment, as defined by the second Statute. That law of God which plants in the heart of man the desire to ameliorate his condition, had gradually, without the sanction of any written law, put an end to the property of one human being in another, to a considerable degree, when

this Statute of Labourers was enacted. Had the pestilence come a century earlier, when the distinctions between the bondman and the free were in far higher efficiency, no laws for regulating wages, or for binding the labourer to the soil, would have been needed. When the slave had died in the common visitation, the master would have lost the services of the man, but he would have had one mouth less to feed. His land would have been untilled, and he must have borne the infliction, as if it were a murrain of his cattle. The pestilence came when labour and capital had become exchangers. But those who had been used to command labour upon their own terms were impatient of the inevitable alteration, when the pestilence exhibited to the free labourers the natural advantage of their reduced numbers. They demanded a free exchange of their property with the other property of food and money. A free exchange, says the statute of Edward, is "to the great damage of the great men, and impoverishing of all the commonalty." But no selfish legislation could wholly prevent this free exchange. A struggle was then begun, which, however gradually relieved from dire oppression and desperate bitterness, is not yet ended. The chains of the serf of the fourteenth century dropt off; but his descendant was still kept manacled in some form or other till the nineteenth; and the faint mark of the collar is still upon his neck.

But, however we must regard this attempt to limit the rate of wages by statute as unjust and inefficient, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there was a serious difficulty for the legislature of Edward III. to surmount in some way. The act of parliament says that the labourers withdrew themselves from service unless they had wages to the double or treble of that they were wont to take before. This averment is confirmed by Knyghton, a chronicler of the time, who mentions as exorbitant wages the payment of a shilling a-day, with his food, to a mower, and eight-pence a-day, with food, to a reaper. The shilling a-day was equal to fifteen shillings of present money; and if that rate could have been maintained for all husbandry operations, the land must have gone out of cultivation for a time, till the balance of capital and labour had been restored by an equalisation of the amount of land to be tilled, and the number of labourers prepared to till it. The parliament stept in with its rude tyrannical remedy to repress the other tyranny. The statute said that a mower should receive fivepence. According to the same law, which also regulates the payment by wheat or money, at the will of the employer, fivepence was equal to half a bushel of wheat. The average produce of wheat per acre was then less than six bushels.* The extravagant demands of the labourers of the time of Edward III. had no relation to the just proportion that must ever subsist between the rate of wages and the commercial value of the produce out of which the labour is to be paid, and the capital maintained in its efficiency. It was not a time when such questions could be understood by the interested parties on either side. They are not understood even now. The same rude contest has gone on in many forms to our own day—a contest which no legislation can settle, however powerful it may have been, at various times, and some not far distant, to step in with stern repression or weak compromise. The contest will never be wholly settled till a just estimate is formed by every member of the social system of the relative value of every other worker in the field of industry.

* Cullum's Hawsted,' speaking of the year 1390; page 219.



CHAPTER XXXI.

Death of Philip of Valois—Renewal of the French war—King Edward ravages Scotland—Expedition of the Black Prince—The Battle of Poitiers—King John a prisoner in England—The Jacquerie—Invasion of France and Peace of Bretigny—Sufferings of France—Condition of England—Statute of Apparel—Social State indicated by Chaucer—Accession to the French crown of Charles V.—The Black Prince in Spain—Bertrand du Guesclin—War in Gascony—Truce—The Black Prince in England—His death—Death of Edward III.—State of the English Church—Wycliffe.

PHILIP of Valois, who had held a troublesome possession of the throne of France for twenty-two years, died in August, 1350. It was a period when the war with England was suspended, without any real approach to a permanent peace. Edward had proposed to resign his pretensions to the French crown, on the condition that he should receive the absolute sovereignty of the provinces in France which had been held as fiefs by preceding English kings. This offer presented a secure basis for a friendly arrangement. Philip rejected it; John, his son and successor, consented to it. After

several years of negociation, the French procurators refused to agree to the terms which their king had promised. The cession of Calais, upon which Edward insisted, was probably more repugnant to the French than that of Gascony. In 1355, prince Edward led an army from the walls of Bordeaux; ravaged the country to the foot of the Pyrenees; and, taking a northward course, laid in ashes cities and towns, and filled a fertile land with desolation, which had been unvisited by war for a hundred years. In regarding such proceedings there was no shudder of humanity in those times; and even in later periods, the ravage of populous districts, and the destruction of commercial towns, have been defended upon the principle that to weaken the resources of an enemy is to abridge the duration of a time of warfare. But we have lived to see a period when war has been conducted with as little injury as possible to the non-belligerents. The change has been produced by the same general causes which have produced a total alteration in the character of the fighting-man. "The modern soldier is not necessarily the stern bloody-handed man the ancient soldier was; there is as much difference between them as between the sportsman and the butcher." * Whilst his son was ravaging on the banks of the Garonne, king Edward was leading an army from Calais to the Somme. The want of provisions drove him back after a march of ten days. Meanwhile the Scots had surprised Berwick; and the king hastened home. In the depth of winter he marched into Scotland, having re-taken Berwick, and he carried havoc through the Lothians. His fleet, laden with provisions, could not make the port of Leith; and he re-crossed the border, leaving behind him the feeling of deadly revenge with which the Scots recorded this season of calamity as "the burnt Candlemas."

In July, 1356, prince Edward, now known as the Black Prince, marched out of Bordeaux, upon a second expedition of waste and pillage. Ascending the Garonne as high as Agen, he turned to the provinces of Querci, Limousin, and Auvergne. The time of the harvest and the vintage was at hand, but the corn was trodden under foot, and the vineyards destroyed. The little army was now in the very centre of France. King John was advancing from Chartres to drive back the marauders; and he crossed the Loire, at Blois, marching on towards Poitiers. Prince Edward was in a hostile country, and he could gain no knowledge of the line upon which the French were moving. He resolved, however, upon retreat. As the English army marched, also in the direction of Poitiers, "they wist not truly where the Frenchmen were; but they supposed that they were not far off, for they could find no more forage, whereby they had great default of victual in their host; and some of them repented that they had destroyed so much as they had done before." † On the 17th of September, being Saturday, the van of prince Edward's small band fell in with the rear of king John's army. There was a skirmish, and those English who rode a-head saw all the fields covered with men at arms. The French king entered into the city of Poitiers. The locality was full of recollections of the glory of France. Here Clovis defeated Alaric, king of the Visigoths. Here Charles Martel drove back an immense host of invading

* Napier, "War in the Peninsula."

† Froissart, Lord Berners' translation. In this narrative of the battle of Poitiers, we must use Froissart's words occasionally, without always attempting to indicate the precise quotations.

Moslems. Edward took up his quarters in a strong place, amongst hedges, vines, and bushes. On the Sunday morning, the French trumpet blew, and every man mounted on horseback, and went into the field, where the king's banner waved in the wind; and there was all the flower of France, with banners and pennons and rich armoury. Three knights went out to see the number of the English; and they reported that they estimated them at two thousand men-at-arms, and four thousand archers, and fifteen hundred other men; but that they were wisely ordered, and that they had lined the hedges and banks with archers, by a road on which four horsemen only could ride, and that at the end of that fortified way there were men at arms afoot and archers before them, so that they would not easily be discomfited. Cardinal Perigord then solicited the king that he might ride to the prince, and show him what danger he and his handful of Englishmen were in. The cardinal went, and the prince of Wales answered to his entreaties—"Sir, the honour of me and my people saved, I would gladly fall to any reasonable way." Between the armies rode the cardinal that Sunday; but could accomplish no agreement. Edward offered to surrender what he had won in that expedition, and to swear not to bear arms against the French king for seven years. But John required, finally, that the prince and a hundred knights should yield themselves prisoners. On the Monday morning, the 19th of September, the cardinal again came; but there was no remedy but to abide the battle. The French marshals approached with their battalions, and their horsemen entered the road where the great hedges were set full of archers. No bow was bent as the columns of cavalry proudly marched up that narrow way. But a command was given; and along the whole extent of that crowded lane, sudden showers of arrows turned what was a procession into a struggle of advance and retreat. At the first flight of the deadly shafts of the English archers, the horses rushed back, and flung out, and fell upon their riders. Then the Gascon men at arms went in amongst the press, and slew the knights and squires in that great disorder. The French also, who were behind, recoiled back, and came on the division of the duke of Normandy; and the men took their horses and fled, when they saw the dreaded archers coming down a little hill, on their flank and rear. Leaping on their horses, the reserve of men at arms of England now advanced; for the lord Chandos said to the prince, "Sir, take your horse and ride forth, the journey is yours." And the prince cried, "Advance banner, in the name of God and of St. George!" Then he saw the lord Robert of Duras lying dead, and he told his men to take him upon a targe to the cardinal of Perigord, whose nephew he was, and to salute him by that token; for the cardinal's men were out in the field against him, which was not pertaining to the right order of arms. Onward the little army went into the thick of their enemies; and the archers shot so wholly together, that none durst come in their danger. At last the king's division encountered the Englishmen. There was lord James Audley, always in the chief of the battle, and he was sore hurt, but as long as his breath served him he fought; and Warwick was there, and Suffolk, and many knights of Gascony. "King John was that day a full right good knight; if the fourth part of his men had done their endeavours as well as he did, the journey had been his in all likelihood." But the French fled from those fields of Beauvoir and Maupertuis, even to the gates of Poitiers. There was a great press to

take the king; and he yielded to sir Dennis of Morbecque, who promised to bring him and his young son, Philip, to the prince of Wales. Where was the prince, when John of France could not go forward because of the press around him? "The prince of Wales," says Froissart, "who was courageous and cruel as a lion, took great pleasure to fight and chase his enemies." But Chandos said, "Set your banner a-high on this bush, that your people may draw hither; nor can I see banners nor pennons of the French; wherefore rest and refresh you, for ye be sore chafed." A red pavilion was set up; and the prince drunk wine; and many lords gathered around him as they came in from the chase. But shortly came up the kingly captive in great peril; for he was surrounded by English and Gascons, who had taken him out of the hands of sir Dennis Morbecque, and strove which should have him. That night the prince of Wales made a supper in his lodging to the French king, and to the great lords that were prisoners. "And always the prince served before the king, as humbly as he could, and would not sit at the king's board, for any desire that the king could make, and exhorted him not to be of heavy cheer, for that king Edward, his father, should bear him all honour and amity, and accord with him so reasonably that they should be friends ever after." And the prince praised the king's great valiantness, and said that every Englishman who saw each man's deed plainly accorded to him the prize and chaplet. This scene, so gracefully performed by him who, a few hours before, was "courageous and cruel as a lion," was in perfect accordance with the system of chivalry. It is not a feeling to be despised,—that gentleness and courtesy which prompted the words and actions of the prince, after this marvellous victory. The right hand of fellowship to a fallen foe is, happily, a principle that has survived the feudal ages in the wars of England. When policy, as in modern instances, has compelled her government to violate it, the people feel ashamed, and the public opinion of another generation reverses the judgment of those who have played the part of the ungenerous victor. On the day after the battle, the prince of Wales marched with his royal prisoner to Bordeaux, the great bulk of captive knights having been admitted to easy ransom.

On the 24th of May, 1357, the Black Prince returned to London, in a triumphal procession, with his royal prisoner. In the pageant the captive—as if the spirit of chivalry was set in contrast with the old Roman pride of leading conquered kings in chains—was shown to the people as an honoured guest; whilst the winner of the great field of Poitiers rode humbly beside him. King John was lodged in the Savoy, a pleasant palace belonging to the duke of Lancaster, king Edward's son; and in the winter following there were jousts in Smithfield, in which the kings of England, of France, and of Scotland were present to take part in the feats of arms. King John was then removed to Windsor with his son Philip. It was a festive season in England. In France there was the extremity of suffering. There were heavy sums to be raised for the ransoms engaged to be paid for the prisoners of Poitiers; and the unhappy cultivators were ground down to the lowest point of misery by the lords of the soil, who had fled in terror before the stout English bowmen. On the 21st of May, 1358, commenced that insurrection of the peasants, which was called the Jacquerie, from the nickname which the poor French villan bore of Jacques Bonhomme. Almost a hundred villagers assembled in Beau-

voisin, and, without any leader, marched forward, vowing destruction on the nobles and knights of France, who, they said, shamed the realm. Destruction to the gentlemen was their cry. The horrors that followed the march of these wretched people are too awful to be described. Their numbers were soon increased to a hundred thousand. After the first terror, assistance was procured from Flanders and Hainault, and they were slain and hanged upon trees in heaps. But still they went on, destroying, in the words of the chronicler, like enraged dogs. Froissart says, "when they were demanded why they did so evil deeds, they would answer, they could not tell, but that they did as they saw others do." There was an universal movement for plunder and vengeance, at a time when communication between distant places was difficult and uncertain. It seemed as if one great passion had suddenly inspired these scattered thousands, and had swallowed up every feeling of fear or of mercy. All the peaceful population, whether of the towns or hamlets, and the women and children of the châteaux and the farms fled before them. The highways were covered with the bodies of their victims; and the wolves came out from the woods to follow their murderous track. At last a body of knights who were returning from a crusade against the pagans of Prussia, and who were headed by Gaston de Foix, one of Froissart's heroes of chivalry, and by Captal de Buche, one of Edward's Gascon knights, came to the rescue of the duchess of Normandy and the duchess of Orleans, who, with several hundred ladies had fled to the castle of Meaux. A large body of the insurgent peasantry, with many people of Paris, to the number of nine thousand, had been admitted into the city, so that all the streets were full of them. They were wretchedly armed, and worn with hunger and fatigue. Out of the castle issued the two knights and their company, with spears and swords, and slew them till they were weary. Seven thousand perished on that day. They never rallied again; and wherever a scattered party was met with, the men of war, that now scoured the country, butchered them without mercy.

France had not yet drained the cup of misery to the dregs. During the captivity of John, the government of the dauphin, Charles, was harassed by contending factions; and the kingdom was in a condition little short of anarchy. John settled with Edward the conditions of a peace, to take place upon the expiration of the truce. He consented to the hard terms which the king of England insisted upon; for a prince of the blood, Charles of Navarre, called the Bad, was adding to the distractions of the kingdom, by setting up claims to the crown. But the regency of France rejected the terms which their captive monarch had agreed to. Edward again invaded France in the autumn of 1359, with a more powerful army than he had ever before assembled; and at the end of March he was encamped before Paris. The fatigues of his winter campaign had greatly reduced his numbers; and now, beleaguering a city which was too strong for assault, he was in want of provisions, and was compelled to retire. The route towards Chartres was covered with men and horses that dropped from hunger and exhaustion; and all the superstition that in those days clung to the firmest minds, was called up by a terrible storm, which swept the camp with a deluge of rain, and which made Edward think of that vengeance of heaven that awaited the man of blood. Thoughts of pacification entered his heart. Negociations were set on foot, and the great peace of Bretigny was concluded on the 8th of May.

The king of England resigned his pretensions to the crown of France, and to the territories of Normandy, Anjou, and Maine.. He restored all the conquered places, with the exception of Guisnes and Calais. He was content to be lord of Aquitaine, retaining Gascony, Poitou, and other dependencies, in full sovereignty. Three million crowns of gold were to be paid in six years for the ransom of king John. The captive king was set at liberty before the end of the year. But peace with England brought no tranquillity to France. The country was now ravaged by bands of discharged soldiers, the Free Companions, who during a twenty years' war had been fighting in separate bands under their own captains. How they acted when the war was ended, Froissart has told in a few quaint words: "There were many strangers that were great captains, and great pillars (pillagers) that would not depart, as Almains (Germans), Brabanters, Flemings, Hainaulters, Gascons, and bad Frenchmen, who were but poor by reason of the war, whereby they sought to recover themselves with making of war in the realm of France. The whole people persevered still in their evil doing, and so they did often much evil in the realm." Amidst their distractions, king John went back to his wasted country. Petrarch had proceeded to Paris upon an embassy to congratulate the king upon his return to his dominions, and he thus describes the scene which met his eyes:—"When I viewed this kingdom, which had been desolated by fire and sword, I could not persuade myself it was the same I had formerly beheld—fertile, rich, and flourishing. On every side it now appeared a dreadful desert; extreme poverty, lands untilled, fields laid waste, houses gone to ruin, except here and there one that was defended by some fortification, or which was enclosed within the walls; everywhere were seen the traces of the English, and the dreadful havoc they had made. Touched by such mournful effects of the rage of man, I could not withhold my tears." Petrarch might have added the ravages of the Jacquerie and of the Free Companions, who had been pillaging since the truce of 1357, to the havoc of the English. The sufferings which France endured at this season were such as could only have been recovered from by a country to which nature has been so bountiful, and whose resources always spring up to grapple with social calamities.

The condition of the people of England at the epoch of the peace of Bretigny presents a striking contrast to that of the people of France. With the exception of the miseries produced by the second pestilence of 1361, we may regard the seventh decade of the fourteenth century as a period of English prosperity. France was devoured by the companies of adventurers and brigands who obeyed no law. England was only disturbed by the transition from serfdom to free labour, in which the labourers asserted their own importance somewhat beyond the limits of discretion. France was weighed down by the oppressions through which property was extorted from the industrious classes, whether by the exactions of the nobles, or the unlimited taxation of the government; and the feudal confederacy to obtain money from a country so devastated by war was met by the Jacquerie of the peasants, and the revolts of the burgesses. England, whenever a tax was demanded for carrying on hostilities, had a parliament, which always turned round steadily upon the king, and required extension of liberties or redress of grievances. At the commencement of the war with France in 1340, before a

subsidy was given, the king's commissioners had to show letters patent authorising them "to grant some graces to the great and small of the kingdom." In 1348 the Commons granted a subsidy on condition that no illegal levying of money should take place. In 1351 a statute was passed that no one should be constrained to find men at arms, other than those who held land by such services, except by consent of parliament. There was always a struggle going forward between the king and the parliament; but it was no longer a struggle merely between the king and the nobles. The Commons had obtained an integral share in the government; and before the end of the reign they were strong enough to remove an administration, and impeach those whom they considered evil advisers of the crown. This strength of the deputies of the people is conclusive evidence that the middle classes, during nearly half a century, had attained so much wealth and consideration, that the old feudal relations of society may be deemed nearly at an end. There probably is no better evidence of the many distinctions of rank amongst the laity, which now existed, than the Statute of Apparel of 1363. It has a few words about regulating the diet of servants; but the chief clauses are intended to restrain "the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their estate and degree."

The statute begins with servants, called grooms—as well servants of lords as of artificers and tradesmen. They and their wives are to wear cloth of a certain low price, with no gold, or silver, or silk, or embroidery. This enactment shows that there was an amount of luxury amongst this class, which ill accords with the notion which some entertain, that below the aristocracy all was rude and miserable. The first enacting clause about dress thus comprises mechanics and commercial servants; the last relates to labourers in husbandry —carters, ploughmen, shepherds, cowherds. If they had not forty shillings of goods or chattels, they were to wear only blanket and russet, and girdles of linen, according to their estate. In these two classes must have been comprised the bulk of the population. Chaucer, the shrewdest observer and the truest painter of manners—who, although he wrote the "Canterbury Tales" twenty years after this period, would naturally in his retirement describe the social state of which he had been a busy member—has little notice of the humbler classes of the community, the peasants, the servants, and the working artisans. Chaucer's Ploughman was a man of "goods and chattels," who though he had spread many a load of dung, and would thresh and ditch, yet paid his tithes and was kind to the poor. He was the small farmer, of whom the land was full—the humble tenant, who was no longer at the bidding of his lord. He was the Parson's brother. The attendant of Chaucer's Knight was a Yeoman. The Statute of Apparel places the yeomen under the

Chaucer.

same regulations as the people of handicraft, and they were to wear no vesture of higher price than forty shillings the whole cloth, without things of gold and silver and costly fur. Chaucer's Yeoman comes in his coat and hood of green, with his sheaf of peacocks' arrows, and his mighty bow. He knows all the usage of woodcraft, for he is a forester; and in spite of statute he has a silver image of St. Christopher, the patron of field-sports, on his breast. He is a specimen of the bold race that won Cressy and Poitiers—men who were shooting at the butts on every common in England, while the French peasantry, who were not entrusted with the cross-bow till after the peace of Bretigny, and then again were forbidden their manly exercises, were playing at dice and draughts in imitation of their lords. Chaucer's men of handicraft are the Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, and Tapiser (tapestry maker). They are clothed each in the livery of his "solemn and great fraternity." Fresh and new is their gear, and the knives at their girdles are mounted with silver. They have chattels and rent enough to be aldermen, a dignity to which their wives look forward, in the hope to be called Madame. The Prentice to such worthies has been painted in one of the "Canterbury Tales"—a proper stout fellow, full of jollity, loving the tavern better than the shop—a dancer at bridals, and a dice-player. The Cook of Chaucer so describes the dissolute youth, probably of gentle blood, who aped the manners of the great in an age when luxurious indulgence was becoming common to all ranks. The amount of individual wealth gave privileges which were not accorded to the mere social condition. There were degrees of permitted luxury amongst people of handicraft, citizens and burgesses, which the law recognised then, as much as individual homage does now. The tradesman who possessed five hundred pounds might wear cloth of silk, and a reasonable decoration of silver trimmings; and their wives and daughters might wear fur turned up with minever—even as gentlemen and esquires of a hundred a year. The citizens of Chaucer, who had chattels enough to be aldermen, were thus lifted out of the less wealthy class—whose wives might wear no silken veils, and must be content with cat-skin fur.

Male Costume, time of Edward III.

The gentlemen and esquires of the statute correspond with the Franklin of Chaucer—he of the beard as white as a daisy—the great householder, whose hospitality was so abundant that "it snewed in his house of meat and drink." In his hall stood his table ready covered all the long day. He gave no sanction to the recent innovation of "the privy parlour," in which the lord of the mansion sometimes now sought to evade the duties of the festive

hall. * The Franklin was a public man—a sire at sessions, a knight of the shire. He was only below the knight in rank and raiment, according to the statute. The knights possessing four hundred marks by the year might wear what they pleased except ermine; and their wives might have pearls and precious stones on their heads. Chaucer's Knight comes in his soiled cassock, and his coat of mail. He had late returned from fighting in mortal battles, and was about to perform his pilgrimage. His son, the young Squire, had been warring in companionship with his father; but his locks are now curled, and his short gown, with sleeves long and wide, is embroidered with white and red flowers, as it were a mead. The Sergeant at Law, who no doubt takes rank with the great of the land, appears not to have been proud of his dress; for he rode but humbly in a medley coat, girt with a sash of silk, with small bars. But his deportment was far more impressive than his dress—"his words were so wise"—a busy man, and yet one that appeared busier than he was. The Physician was by his side, in his bright purple cloak and his furred hood—one who, although he talked of the ascendancy of the planets and of magic natural, was learned in Æsculapius and Galen. Of the laity of this goodly company we have not forgotten the Wife of Bath, in speaking of apparel. She was a cloth-maker, with great custom; but her coverchiefs or head-dresses were of the finest quality, and her hosen were of scarlet. What were ordinances of apparel to her, who "husbands at the church-door had she had five?" If the statute affected her, she would despise it, as most others did—for it was repealed within a year of its enactment.

Female Costume, time of Edward III.

Of this company of Chaucer who travelled from the inn of Southwark to St. Thomas's shrine at Canterbury, seven of the characters belong to the ecclesiastical establishment of England—the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar, the Clerk of Oxford, the Parson, the Sumptnour (summoner), and the Pardoner. Of such individual representatives of a great class we shall have briefly to speak before we close this period of our domestic history. Looking at them generally in connection with the other classes that the Statute of Apparel indicates, and that our first great English poet describes, we cannot but be impressed with this general view of a condition of society in which the distinctions of rank are so clearly marked, but in which there is no slavish

* In "The Vision of Piers Ploughman," the innovation is thus lamented:—

"Elenge (mournful) is the hall each day in the week;
There the lord nor the lady liketh nought to sit.
Now hath each rich a rule to eaten by himself
In a privy parlour."

submission either to high blood, or great wealth, or outward sanctity, or professional distinction. Henry Bailey, the host of the Tabard, is the director of the pilgrimage. He presides over the supper that precedes the departure of the pilgrims, and he suggests that to shorten the journey each "should

The Tabard. (From Urry's edition of Chaucer, 1720.)

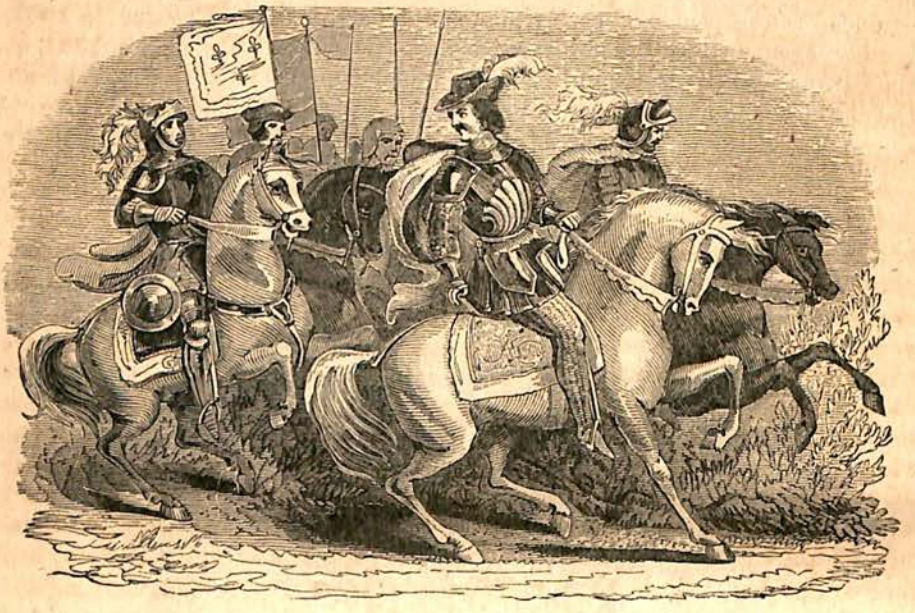
tellen tales alway." The "very perfect gentle Knight" feels no humiliation at agreeing to this proposal; and he relates his noble romance of chivalry as readily as the Miller tells his tale with its broad jests. The Prioress and the Nun have no false shame in being under the safeguard of the courtesy of the Knight, who is "meek as is a maid." The Sergeant at Law, who sits as judge at assize, and the solemn Physician, are wayside and board companions with the Haberdasher and the other worthies of the London guilds. The lordly Monk, looking with some pity upon the meek Parson and the studious Clerk of Oxford, has no scorn of his poor unworldly brothers in their humility. The prosperous Franklin listens to the slender and choleric Reve, who might be his neighbour's steward; and the Merchant, in his Flanders hat, "sounding alway the increase of his winning," has no fear of his position being compromised by the familiarity of the rough Shipman, on his wretched hackney, dressed in his gown of faldings or coarse cloth. The Cook, and the Manciple, a provider of commons for the inns of court, make mirth for the company by their quarrels and their jokes; and the Friar tells a story of diablerie in dispraise of the Sumptnour. Surely in this fellowship, in which there is no arrogance and no servility, we may recognise a state of society where class distinctions were so marked that haughtiness and reserve were not thought necessary for the assertion of individual dignity; but in which there was a natural respect of man for his fellows,—the spirit which had made England great, and which may yet survive the modern tendency to a grovelling prostration before rank and riches.

England was not permitted to remain many years at peace. If the chivalrous king John had lived—he who, when the treaty of Bretigny was not faithfully kept by the French, came again to England, and yielded himself prisoner—it is probable that the high regard of the two kings for the courage and courtesy of each other, might have cemented a friendship which would have extended to the people of each realm. John returned to England in 1363, leaving France under the government of the Dauphin. He died in 1364, at the Savoy; and the Dauphin became king of France, as Charles V. Without the chivalrous qualities of his father,—for his prudence had been too conspicuous at Poitiers, where he left his young brother, Philip, to fight alone by

Group from Stothard's "Canterbury Pilgrims."

the side of the king—he possessed a sagacity of more practical value in a sovereign than personal bravery. "There never was a king," said Edward III., "who cared so little about arming himself, and yet gave me so much to do as this Charles." The prince of Wales, with the title of prince of Aquitaine, was appointed to the possession and government of the southern provinces which had been ceded to Edward at the peace of Bretigny; and with all the splendour of his reputation, and the high qualities which he really possessed, he disgusted the nobles of Gascony by his haughty bearing. The people of the ceded provinces were indignant that they should have been transferred in complete sovereignty to England. They clung, as Frenchmen, to the feudal superiority of France; and they resolved to obey the English king with their lips, but never to forget their allegiance to the crown of which English kings

had been the vassals. Their discontent was smouldering, when the prince of Wales took up the cause of Peter I., king of Castile and Leon, who had been driven from his throne by his half-brother, Henry, assisted by a strong band of free companions, under the command of the great adventurer, Du Guesclin.



Bertrand Du Guesclin at the head of a Free Company.

Peter has been branded with the name of "the Cruel." His private history is so complicated with his public character, that we must content ourselves with stating that his imprisonment, and supposed murder of his wife, Blanche of Bourbon, provoked the invasion of Castile by the French forces in 1366, and the dethronement of the unpopular king. Peter had previously made an alliance with Edward III., and he now fled to the court of the Black Prince at Bordeaux. It is difficult to understand the motive which induced the policy of attempting the restoration of Peter to his throne, beyond hostility to a cause which Charles of France had espoused. In 1367, the Black Prince led a great army of English, Gascons, and Normans from Bordeaux; and entering Navarre, by the pass of Roncesvalles, met the army of Henry in Castile, near the right bank of the Ebro. The battle of Najara was a complete victory, in which the Black Prince displayed the resources of a great commander even more remarkably than in his previous successes. This was not a battle in which the proud and pampered nobles of France were intoxicated by their own superiority of numbers, as at Cressy and Poitiers. It was a battle of real soldiery on both sides—the English yeomen against the Free Companions—Chandos against Du Guesclin. It was a victory not only useless to the prince of Wales, but injurious in many ways to himself and his country. The faithless Peter, when he had been restored, refused to abide by his promise of paying the cost of the war. Edward's army was reduced to the utmost misery by the want of provisions; and the prince had contracted a fatal malady which

in a few years terminated his career of glory. He hastily returned to Gascony. The ingrate king was in six months hurled from his throne, and murdered by his half-brother. The greatest trophy of this campaign was the capture of Du Guesclin. An old writer has related a scene at Bordeaux singularly illustrative of the manners of this age. The prince of Wales sits with his barons after dinner, served with wine and spices, and talking of deeds of arms, of love passages, of prisons, and of ransoms. The sire de Lebret ventures to say that men report that there is a prisoner whom the prince dare not deliver; and the prince swears that he knew no knight in the world whom, being his prisoner, he would not deliver for a fair ransom. De Lebret asks the prince if he forgets Bertrand du Guesclin. His colour changes, and he commands Bertrand to be brought before him. And certain knights go to Bertrand, who orders wine for them, and they tell him, that they thought he would be ransomed. "I have neither half-penny nor penny," says Bertrand, "and owe ten thousand livres which I have spent in this city. I have eaten, drunk, given, and played at dice with it." Then Bertrand goes to the prince, in the gray coat which he wears, and the prince cannot keep from laughing when he sees him, and says, "Well, Bertrand, how fare ye?" Bertrand bows a little, and replies, "Sir, when it shall please you, I may fare better; many a day have I heard the rats and mice, but the song of birds it is long since I heard. I shall hear them when it is your pleasure." The prince tells Bertrand he may go, if he will swear never to bear arms against him, or to assist Henry of Spain. Bertrand refuses, and reproaches the prince that he had gone to Spain through covetousness, and in hopes to have the throne after Peter's death: but that Peter had cheated him, for which he thanked Peter heartily. "By my soul, he is right," saith the prince. And then he tells Bertrand he shall go, but not without a good ransom. He answers that he is a poor knight, that his estate is mortgaged, that he owes ten thousand florins besides, and that the prince ought to be moderate. Edward replies that what Bertrand himself fixes he would be content with. Then Bertrand says that he ought not to value himself too low, and that he would engage to give for his freedom one hundred thousand double golden florins. "You cannot pay it," said the prince, "nor do I want it," and Bertrand protests that he would not give less than sixty thousand, and if Henry of Spain and the king of France would not lend them, all the sempstresses of France would spin the ransom for him. The prince would have quitted him for ten thousand double florins. All the barons marvel greatly, and Chandos says to Du Guesclin, "If you have need of any help, I will lend you ten thousand." "Sir," quoth Bertrand, "I thank you; but before I seek anything of you, I will try the people of my own country." *

In 1368 the Spanish campaign was producing much public evil for the prince of Wales. He imposed a heavy tax upon the people of Gascony; and the great lords carried their complaints to the throne of Charles V. The interference of France was a violation of the treaty of Bretigny; but Charles ventured to summon the prince of Aquitaine to answer the complaint, assuming the position of his feudal lord. The prince said he would come with sixty thousand lances. The great war was now renewed. Edward III.

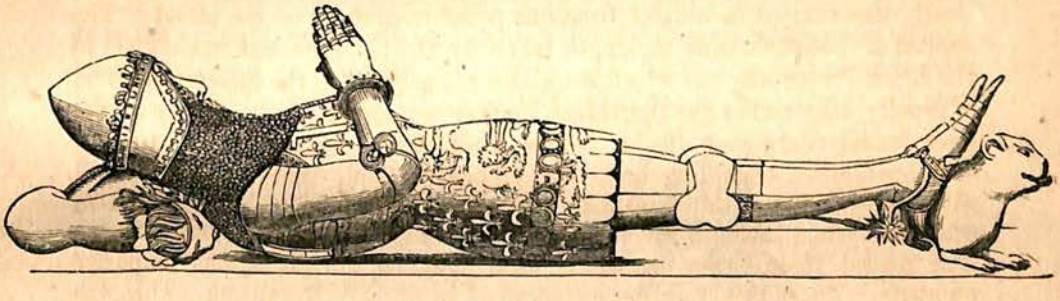
* See the excellent translation of this passage from "Mémoires de Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin," in "Historical Parallels," vol. i.

re-assumed the title of king of France. There can be no doubt that it was the settled policy of Charles to obtain possession of Gascony and the other ceded districts. King Edward was growing old. His son was in feeble health. The government of the English was a yoke of which the Gascon nobles and people were impatient. In that age of military adventurers, the leaders changed their sides without much scruple, and many of the fighting Gascons went over to the banner of France. The French king adopted a bold policy, and assembled a fleet at Harfleur for the invasion of England; and Philip of Burgundy was to be its commander. When he was a captive boy at Windsor, he asserted his title to the name of Le Hardi by striking the cup-bearer of Edward III. for serving his master before the king of France. But Philip gave up the attempt to invade England; and he showed no rash disposition to encounter the Duke of Lancaster, who had landed at Calais with a great army. The king of France would not allow a battle to be risked, which might terminate as other great battles had done. He suffered Lancaster to march through the northern provinces. But in 1370 the French entered Gascony. The Black Prince took the field, and the royal princes of Anjou and Berne retired before him. Limoges had been betrayed to these dukes by the inhabitants; and during a month's siege Edward, sick almost to death, was carried in a litter from one point to another of the attack. The capital of Limousin was at length taken by storm. The last warlike act of the Black Prince was one which associates his name with the infamous system of cruelty, that makes the individual bravery, endurance, and courtesy of the later feudal times look like a hollow mockery—a miserable imposture of self-glorification, trampling upon the higher principle that unites strength with mercy. Three thousand men, women, and children were butchered in cold blood when Limoges was taken. A few knights, resolved to battle to the last, placed their backs against a wall, and long fought against superior numbers. These prince Edward ordered to be received to ransom. This was chivalry. Such contradictions show how unsafe a guide it was for the rulers of mankind; and how blessed were the people who the soonest escaped from its accursed dominion.

The Black Prince, in broken health, comes back to England. His brother John of Gaunt, the duke of Lancaster, succeeds him in the government of Gascony. Du Guesclin is now at the head of a daring band; and those of Bordeaux who said of him, whom they called an ugly fellow—which in truth he was—"There is no castle, however strong, that would not soon surrender if he went thither to assault it," were true judges of his character. Wherever the English banner was displayed, Du Guesclin was there at the head of his Adventurers. There were no great battles fought, for the French always avoided them. In vain Lancaster marched through France, from Calais to Bordeaux, in 1373. The French were ready to harass him by skirmishes, but not to fight in any general engagement. In vain Sir Robert Knowles led an army from Calais to the walls of Paris. A sagacious policy determined the French government to prolong an indecisive but most effective war. One by one the English lost many of their strong places. A truce was concluded in 1374, which lasted till 1377. The possessions which had been surrendered by the treaty of Bretigny were all lost, with the exception of Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Calais. Too much of France was surrendered by that treaty

to a foreign rule; and it was in the natural course of events that the feeling of nationality, to which its provisions were repugnant, and which an unwise rule had rendered more odious, should assert itself; and, gaining strength by every small success, leave England at last a very limited dominion, as the costly purchase of the ambition of forty years.

In 1369, king Edward lost his queen, Philippa, the faithful wife of his boyhood and his age. In 1376, her first-born, the great prince of Wales, never rallying from the fever of his Spanish campaign, and worn out by the excitement of wars and conquests which had begun from his earliest years, also died. To the old king remained John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, his third son, (Lionel, the second, had died in 1368); Edward of Langley, duke of York; and Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester. After the death of queen Philippa, the happy fortune of the king seems to have deserted him. When the prince of Wales returned to England, he regained the popularity which he had lost in Gascony, by opposing his father's government. The expiring passions of "dotage," more miserable than its "tears," had thrown the conqueror of France under the dominion of a mistress, Alice Ferrers. To



Effigy on the tomb of the Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral.

her influence, and that of her creatures, the eldest son of the king was naturally opposed. With the support of the prince of Wales, the parliament, in 1376, forced a measure upon the king, in which her name is mentioned in connexion with unlawful suits prosecuted by way of "maintenance." But it was also clear that the Black Prince looked with jealousy upon the power of John, duke of Lancaster, who was thought to aspire to the crown. Edward had the interests of his son to maintain, Richard of Bordeaux. The friends of Lancaster were accused of misdemeanours in the Parliament of 1376; but the prince of Wales died, and Lancaster regained his influence.

It would be tedious for us to follow the ill-understood contests of the remaining span of Edward's life. Richard, then ten years of age, was presented to the houses of Parliament as the successor to all the rights of his father. But the influence of the duke of Lancaster was all-powerful. The Speaker of the Commons, William de la Marc, who had led the opposition supported by the prince of Wales, was imprisoned; and William of Wykeham was deprived of his temporalities, and dismissed the court. His merits will be ever associated with his splendid educational foundations of Winchester and New College, Oxford. Lancaster took up the cause of John Wycliffe, who was under prosecution for his opinions; and when the reformer

was called to defend himself at St. Paul's before the Bishop of London, the duke accompanied him, and a violent quarrel ensued between the laymen and the ecclesiastics. A riot, in which the citizens of London took part against the king's powerful son, ensued. Thus were the last few months of the life of Edward disturbed. He had completed the fiftieth or jubilee year of his reign in February, 1377, and he published a general amnesty for all offences—evidently an act of the ruling power in the state, for Wykeham was excluded. He died on the 21st of June, 1377, with none to soothe his last hours but Alice Ferrers. She took the ring from his finger, and the mighty victor was alone with the all-conqueror;

Effigy of Wykeham, Winchester.

"Death came dryvinge after, and al to duste passhed
Kynges and knyghtes, kaysers and popes." *

The state of the English Church will be more clearly developed in the next reign than in that of Edward III. During the half century in which he sate upon the throne, the outward magnificence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy had reached its height. The great churches were finished with a refinement of taste which has left succeeding ages to wonder and copy. Then were completed the cathedrals of Lincoln, Wells, Peterborough, Salisbury. The abbey church of Westminster lifted up its glorious arches in rivalry with those of Winchester, which its munificent bishop, Wykeham, had remodelled. London was covered with the houses of the Mendicant Orders, who have fixed their names upon the localities which they inhabited — Black-Friars, and White-Friars, and Crutched-Friars, and Austin-Friars. Parish churches were in almost every principal street of the metropolis. The rural parishes were as bountifully supplied for the ministrations of religion. But amidst all these external indications of a power which it might be supposed would never die, there was a growing conviction

Dominican, or Black Friar.

* "Piers Ploughman," v. 14126 in Mr. Wright's admirable new edition.

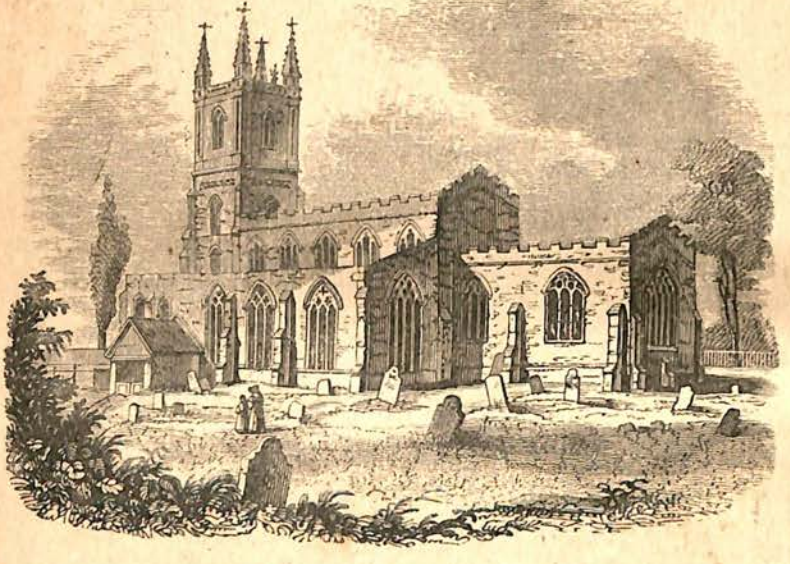
that this house was built upon the sands. A quarter of a century before the death of Edward III.,—in 1353,—a law had been passed against Provisors—those who obtained from the pope a reversion of benefices and church dignities. In 1356, Wycliffe began his career as an ecclesiastical reformer, by writing his treatise, called, "The last Ages of the Church." In 1365, the pope having demanded the arrears of the tribute known as "Peter's pence," it was refused by the Parliament, and Wycliffe strenuously supported this resistance to the demand. But there was something more formidable to the papal authority, and to the system which was founded upon it, than the acts of the Legislature. There was a public opinion forming, which, before the circulation of books by printing, and with the imperfect communication of one district with another, was diffused in a very remarkable way through the country. A general feeling began to spread that the church dignitaries, and the religious orders, were more intent upon their own aggrandisement, and the gratification of their own luxury, than the upholding of the faith and duties of the Gospel. The mass of the people were ignorant of the essentials of religion, though they bowed before its forms. In the universities there were young men who were like Chaucer's clerk:

Franciscan, or Grey Friar.

> "Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
> And gladly would he learn and gladly teach."

To such the covert licentiousness of the monks, and the open profligacy of the mendicant orders, was a deep humiliation. They went forth, each to his small country cure, to speak of a holier religion than belonged to the worship of relics, or the purchase of indulgences. The Sumptnours, who were the ministers of the extortions of the ecclesiastical courts, and the Pardoners, who hawked about dispensations for sin, were their especial aversion. The satire of Chaucer was a reflection of the prevailing estimate of the Monk, "full, fat, and in good point;" of the Friar, "a wanton and a merry;" of the Sumptnour, who thought "a man's soul was in his purse;" of the Pardoner, with his wallet "full of pardon come from Rome all hot." In their sermons, secular priests now freely quoted the holy scriptures, in the common tongue; and they looked forward to the work which their great leader Wycliffe, the honoured professor of theology at Oxford, was preparing—the translation into English of Christ's Testament. His citation for heresy in the last year of Edward III. was the tribute to his importance. In a few years the preaching of Wycliffe and his

disciples would go through the land, scattering the corruptions of the Church with a power that for a time seemed likely to shake the whole fabric of society. The age was not ripe for the great Reformation that then seemed impending But out of Wycliffe's rectory of Lutterworth seeds were to be borne upon the wind, which would abide in the earth till they sprang up into the stately growth of other centuries.



Lutterworth Church.

ENGLAND.	SCOTLAND.	FRANCE.	SPAIN.	GERMANY.	PAPAL STATES.
800 *Egbert*	800 Achaius	800 Charlemagne		800 Charlemagne	800 Leo III.
		814 Louis I.		814 Louis I.	816 Stephen V.
	819 Congale III.				817 Pascal I.
					824 Eugene II.
	824 Dougal				827 Valentine
	834 Alpin				827 Gregory IV.
836 Ethelwolf	836 Kenneth II.	843 Charles the Bald		843 Louis II.	843 Sergius II.
	854 Donald V.				847 Leo IV.
857 Ethelbald	858 Constantine II.				855 Benedict III.
860 Ethelbert			858 Garcia I.		858 Nicolas I.
866 Ethelred I.					867 Adrian II.
872 Alfred	874 Ethus	877 Louis I.		876 Carloman	872 John VIII.
	876 Gregory	879 Louis II.		876 Louis III.	882 Martin I.
		879 Carloman	880 Fortunio	876 Charles le Gros	884 Adrian III.
	892 Donald VI.	884 Charles le Gros		887 Arnold	885 Stephen VI.
		888 Hugh			891 Formosus
		898 Charles the Simple		899 Louis IV.	896 Stephen VII.
900 Edward the Elder					897 Rom. Formosus
	901 Constantine III.				897 John IX.
			902 Sancho I.		900 Benedict IV.
					903 Leo V.
					904 Sergius III.
					911 Anastasius
				911 Conrad I.	913 Lando
		922 Robert		919 Henry I.	914 John X.
925 Athelstan		923 Ralph			928 Leo VI.
			926 Garcia II.		929 Stephen VIII.
					931 John XI.
	938 Malcolm I.	936 Louis IV.		936 Otho the Great	936 Leo VII.
941 Edmund					939 Stephen IX.
					943 Martin II.
946 Edred		954 Lothaire			946 Agapet II.
955 Edwy	958 Indulphus				956 John XII.
959 Edgar					964 Benedict V.
	968 Duffus				965 John XIII.
	972 Cullenus				972 Benedict VI.
					973 Domnus II.
975 Edward the Martyr	973 Kenneth III.		970 Sancho II.	973 Otho II.	974 Benedict VII.
978 Ethelred II.					983 John XIV.
		986 Louis V.		983 Otho III.	985 John XV.
		987 Hugh Capet			986 John XVI.
	994 Constantine IV.		994 Garcia III.		996 Gregory V.
	996 Grimus	997 Robert			999 Silvester II.
					1003 John XVII.
			1000 Sancho III.	1002 Henry II.	1003 John XVIII.
	1004 Malcolm II.				1009 Sergius IV.
					1012 Benedict VIII.
					1024 John XIX.
1016 Edmund Ironside				1024 Conrad II.	1033 Benedict IX.
1017 Canute					1044 Gregory VI.
1036 Harold	1034 Duncan	1031 Henry I.	1033 Ferdinand I. (*Castile*)		1047 Clement II.
1039 Hardicanute	1040 Macbeth		1035 Garcia IV. (*Navarre*)	1039 Henry III.	1048 Damasius II
1041 Edward Confessor			1035 Ramirez I. (*Aragon*)		

ENGLAND.	SCOTLAND.	FRANCE.	SPAIN.	GERMANY.	PAPAL STATES.
			1054 Sancho VII. (*Navarre*) 1054 Peter II. (*Aragon*)	1056 Henry V.	1049 Leo IX.
1066 Harold II.	1057 Malcolm III.	1060 Philip I.	1060 James I. (*Aragon*)		1055 Victor II.
1066 William I.			1061 Henry I. (*Castile*)		1057 Stephen X.
1087 William II.			1066 Sancho I. (*Aragon*)		1059 Nicolas II.
			1066 Sancho I. (*Castile*)		1061 Alexander II.
	1093 Donald Bane		1072 Alphonso I. (*Castile*)		1073 Gregory VII.
	1094 Duncan		1076 Sancho V. (*N. and A.*)		1086 Victor III.
			1094 Peter I. (*Nav. and Ar.*)		1088 Urban II.
	1095 Donald Bane (restored)			1107 Henry V.	1099 Pascal II.
1100 Henry I.	1098 Edgar	1109 Louis VI.	1104 Alphonso I. (*N. and A.*)		1118 Gelasius II.
	1107 Alexander I.		1109 Urraca (*Castile*)	1125 Lothaire	1119 Calixtus II.
1135 Stephen	1124 David I.		1126 Alphonso II. (*Castile*)		1124 Honorius II.
		1137 Louis VII.	1133 Garcia V. (*Navarre*)	1139 Conrad III.	1130 Innocent II.
			1133 Ramirez II. (*Aragon*)		1143 Celestine II.
			1137 Petronilla (*Aragon*)		1144 Lucius II.
	1153 Malcolm IV.		1150 Sancho VI. (*Navarre*)	1152 Frederic I.	1145 Eugenius III.
1154 Henry II.			1157 Sancho II. (*Castile*)		1153 Anastasius IV.
	1165 William		1158 Alphonso III. (*Castile*)		1154 Adrian IV.
		1180 Philip II.	1162 Alphonso II. (*Aragon*)		1159 Alexander III.
					1181 Lucius III.
					1185 Urban III.
					1187 Gregory VIII.
1189 Richard I.			1194 Sancho VII. (*Navarre*)	1191 Henry VI.	1188 Clement III.
1199 John			1196 Peter II. (*Aragon*)		1191 Celestine III.
1216 Henry III.		1223 Louis VIII.		1209 Otto IV.	1198 Innocent III.
	1214 Alexander II.				1216 Honorius III.
			CASTILE AND LEON.		1227 Gregory IX.
					1241 Celestine IV.
		1226 Louis IX.	1230 Ferdinand III.	1212 Frederic II.	
			1252 Alphonso X.	1251 Conrad IV.	1243 Innocent IV.
	1249 Alexander III.			1254 Interregnum	1254 Alexander IV.
					1261 Urban IV.
				1273 Rodolph	1265 Clement IV.
1272 Edward I.		1270 Philip III.			1272 Gregory X.
					1276 Innocent V.
					1276 Adrian V.
					1276 John XXI.
					1277 Nicolas III.
					1281 Martin IV.
	1286 Margaret		1284 Sancho IV.		1285 Honorius IV.
	1292 John Balliol	1285 Philip IV.			1288 Nicolas IV.
	1296 Interregnum		1295 Ferdinand IV.	1292 Adolphus	1294 Celestine V.
1307 Edward II.	1306 Robert I.	1314 Louis X.		1298 Albert I.	1295 Boniface VIII.
		1316 Philip V.	1312 Alphonso XI.		1303 Benedict XI.
1327 Edward III.	1329 David II.	1322 Charles IV.		1308 Henry VII.	1305 Clement V.
		1328 Philip VI.		1314 Louis V.	1316 John XXII.
		1350 John	1350 Pedro		1334 Benedict XII.
		1364 Charles V.		1347 Charles IV.	1342 Clement VI.
			1366 Henry II.		1352 Innocent VI.
			1367 Pedro (restored)		1362 Urban V.
1377 Edward III. *died.*	1371 Robert II.		1369 Henry II. (restored)		1376 Gregory XI.

Printed by BRADBURY, EVANS, and Co., Whitefriars, London.

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Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018